

AFTERNOON

212.41

Instructions

FOR THE
WHOLE YEAR.

T O M. I.

B E I N G

Practical Thoughts for all
*Sundays and Holidays, from
Advent to Easter.*

Printed in the Year 1699.

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To the READER.

I Had concluded, that, with the Gospels, I had finish'd the Instructions for the Year; but being put in mind by a Friend, that the Epistles and Gospels were a part only of the Morning-Office, and that in the Year, there were Afternoons as well as Mornings, I was perswaded, that my Work was but half done. Having therefore again taken up the Pen, I here present you with Afternoon-Instructions, and you see the Occasion of the Title. It cannot be here expected, the Matter should be exactly fitted to each

To the Reader.

Day, having now neither Epistle nor Gospel to determine the Subject: However, I have done it in a great part; but my chief Business was to provide a Lesson for each Day; not that there want Books, out of which every one might provide for themselves; but because I was convinc'd that a Lesson cut out for every Sunday and Holiday would look like a Task of the Day, and might be an Encouragement for many to read for half an Hour, who otherwise would have had no Thoughts of spending it so well. If it proves so, I have made it part of my Care, that it be no lost time; having endeavor'd to chuse such Matter for the Subject of these Lessons,
that

To the Reader.

that I cannot but hope, as many as will be constant in Reading them, will find a full Information of every Duty, that belongs to a Christian Life, and in this have sufficient Recompence of the Pains they have taken. A passing Glance at the Principal Contents, which I have annex'd to them, will witness the Truth of what I depose, and, I hope, give Encouragement to the Undertaking. There may be some Repetitions of what I have already publish'd; but 'tis what I have generally endeavor'd to avoid; and I cannot but presume of the Reader's Excuse, if he hears more than once of what is for his Good; tho' I shall be very well contented too with all

To the Reader.

their Reproof, upon this Account, who are of that Decil Temper, as to require no more than once to be told of their Duty. If there are sometimes some severe Expressions, the Perverseness of a Corrupt World, Obstinate in Iniquity, must be my Apology; it lies charm'd in a dead Sleep; and if nothing less than Thunder be necessary to awaken it, what help would there be in the soft Whisper of a gentle Admonition? Those then, who make hard Words necessary, must answer for them. As for what Oversight there may be, I must leave these to the Reader's Charity. He cannot but see, I design his Good, and this must incline him to be Favorable.

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AFTER-

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FOR THE
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First Sunday of Advent.

THIS being a Day, wherein the Church, in the Gospel, calls us to the Consideration of the Day of Judgment, when we shall all be presented before the Tribunal of Christ, and from him receive the Sentence of partaking either of the Happiness of God, or of the Misery of Devils, we cannot do better, than think of making some Preparation, such as may give us Hopes, of finding Favor, even in that Day of Terror. The

The only Ground of this Hope must be in the Mercy of God, the Passion of Christ, and in the Observance of the Law of God; and one Principal Preparation for this, consists, in calling our selves often to an Account, and in the frequent Examen of our Conscience. This is recommended by the most Eminent of the Holy Fathers, and by all, who have given Directions for a Virtuous Life; and Experience has so far confirm'd the Method, that I know of no better Instruction I can give to those, who desire to prepare against the Day of Judgment, than that they would frequently look into their ways, call themselves often to an Account; for that thus they will be best prepar'd to render an Account to God, whenever they shall be summon'd to appear before him.

The Reason is, because a Life of Virtue, such as the Gospel requires, is subject to so many Difficulties and Mistakes, that if a Christian does not often, with a Watchful and Industrious Eye, search into his own Ways, he may very easily be overseen, and be then going on in the Ways, that lead to Death, when he flatters himself with the pleasing Thoughts of being in the Paths of Life Eternal.

First then, this Examen is necessary, for discovering such Disorders, as naturally arise from that Corruption, we bring with us into the World, For as in a Garden, neither Banks nor Walks can be kept in order, except he, who has the Charge, be careful, to observe the growing Weeds: And if for any time he lays by this Care, the whole Beauty will soon be lost, and a general Wildness will disfigure the Place; so is it in the Soul of Man; for since this, of it self, is barren, as to all that is Good, and as naturally shoots forth its Vicious Inclinations, as the Earth does Weeds or Thistles; where-ever there is not a careful Eye to observe it, it must necessarily be disorder'd with many Evils, and nothing of that Regularity can be found in it, such as the Commands of God and his Gospel require.

Secondly, This Examen is necessary to discern the true State of the Soul, in regard of many things, which seem Innocent, and without Reproof, and yet in Reality are very far from being so. The effect of Education is such, that we have generally a good Opinion of those Things and Ways, to which we have been accustomed from our Youth; and yet these Impressions are very often so disagreeable

ble to the Principles of Justice and Truth, that there is a Necessity of Correcting them ; and there can be no Security even against Scandal and Vice, if the Judgment be not reform'd by more solid Maxims, such as the Gospel teaches, and are to have the Conduct of the Christian's Life.

Thirdly, This Examen is necessary, to rectifie those Impressions, we receive from the Example and Authority of others. Example is very powerful, in inclining us to judge too favorably of such things, as have no other Warrant, but from Practice, but, in themselves, are unjustifiable, as being contrary to the Rules Christ has given us. And where the Authority of those come in, who are reputed Regular and Good, here we are apt to take up things upon Trust, and upon the Credit only of their Reputation, who practice them. And how often is it, that, by this way, the Failings of others are made a Rule ; and what the Good, in their serious Thoughts, condemn in themselves as Rashness or Passion, and make the Subject of their Repentance, is set down by indiscreet Observers, as what may be practis'd with Security, and, for the future, need not give them any farther Occasion of Scruple ?

Fourthly,

Fourthly, This Examen is necessary to distinguish the Interior Motions of the Soul; for these being so very Nice and Subtle, that Vanity, Pride and Self-love take upon them the Resemblance of Humility, Piety, and the Love of God; Custom and Compliance appear under the Disguise of Duty and Devotion; Fear, Dejection and Scruples counterfeit Repentance; and all the other evil Passions of the Mind dissemble their Corruption under borrow'd Colors, and are so fitted for Deceit, that the most Watchful and Cautious scarce know how to be secure against their Snares, and the Inconsiderate must unavoidably be surpriz'd in them.

Many other Reasons there are, which daily Experience must suggest to moderate Observers, for pressing the Necessity of Christians taking a Review of themselves, and examining all their Practices, Customs, Exercises Spiritual and Temporal, their Motives, their Passions, Desires, and their Thoughts: There being so many Ways, by which Corruption insinuates it self, notwithstanding the best Defence that can be made against it, that I do not see, how those, who neglect it, can so much as hope for any Improvement in Virtue; or
answer

answer the least part of their Duty, amidst so many Difficulties and Dangers, which so closely attend them on every side.

This has been the Motive, that all those, who have prescrib'd Rules for a Religious Life, have inserted this as one necessary for that Profession, and declar'd to their Followers, that the due Observance of it is one of the most effectual Means for coming up to that Perfection, which they propose. Now, if it be necessary in that retir'd State, which shuts out a great part of the World; how much more must it be so to those, who live in the midst of a corrupt Generation, where the Dissipations are infinit, the Hazards without number; where Necessities plead, Troubles confound, Interest prevails, Example draws out of the way, Dependance perplexes, Injustice is confirm'd, and Vice is in Authority? Where a Universal Corruption has not only obscur'd the Paths of Virtue, but even brought them into such Contempt, that whoever confines his Steps to them, must be pointed at with Reproach? Where these are the unhappy Circumstances of Life, and every one is left to the Conduct of his own single Judgment; so that while the Dangers are greater, the
Helps

Helps are less, is there not a much greater Necessity of practising this Rule, of observing their Ways, and calling themselves to an Account? It is certainly so: And therefore we may conclude this Point with this Position; that Examination of Conscience is so necessary for all, that, without it, there can be no Improvement in Virtue; and that it is not more necessary for Religious, than for those, who live in the World.

The Necessity then being concluded, when is this Examination to be made? There are several Times to be assign'd for this, according to the several Circumstances of Christians. That which may most generally be observ'd, is the Evening, when every one may look back on the Day, and see, how far they have observ'd, or departed from the Duties of their State. This Daily Examination is recommended to all, and if exactly perform'd, may give them a great Knowledge of themselves, and of their Ways, and be as a Light for the Amendment of all their Failings; but it will be altogether useless, if when the Examination is examin'd, it be found to be no more than a Ceremonial Silence, or some Minutes given to Drowsiness, or to unprofitable Amusements.

Others,

Others, whose better Circumstances will give them leave, may perform a double Duty in this way, by calling themselves to an Account, both at Noon, and at Night: And thus the time being shorter, the Account may be better made.

Another time proper for all, is that of *Sundays*, and likewise of *Holidays*, when, besides their usual Devotions, they may find one Quarter of an Hour's Retirement, and either kneeling, walking or sitting, look into the true State of their Souls, and observe what is to be amended, and what improv'd.

Another time is that, when they prepare to lay open their Souls to their Director; for this must have a previous Examination. But that, which may be of more Advantage for the truer Knowledge of themselves, is to chuse some other leisure Hour to confer with him, about the Affairs of Eternity, and all the Concerns of it; when they make a more particular Enquiry, as to all their Doubts, in the Practices and Profession of Life, as to all Exercises of Devotion, as to the best Means of Improvement, as to their most usual Difficulties, Temptations, Inclinations, &c. Those, who have their time at command, cannot want Opportunities of doing it; and others, who
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are more engag'd in Business, or even in Service, with a good Will, and some Contrivance, may find Leisure on *Sundays* for this Conference, so necessary for their Spiritual Advantage; so that if there be any, who wholly omit it, it must be suspected as a Neglect, and that they have not a true Sense of their own Infirmities and Wants, nor a sincere Desire of finding Remedy for them.

All Business, that is of Concern, and has Difficulty in it, requires good Advice for preventing Miscarriage; and there are scarce any so Indifferent to their own Interest, but who, in their Temporal Affairs, are wise enough to follow this Method. Here it is, they enquire, where is the Person of greatest Sincerity and Experience, with whom they may consult; to such an one they make the best Interest, they lay open their Case, they follow his Advice; and, upon any new Difficulty appearing, or Change of Circumstances, consult him again and again. This is the common Wisdom of the Children of this Generation. And now let these tell me, whether the Business of Eternity be not of the greatest Concern; whether it be not perplext with the greatest Difficulties; and whether new ones do not almost daily appear. Where then can the Ex-

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cuse

cuse be, if there be not a like Sollicitude for consulting, and taking Advice? Where can be the Fear of a Disappointment, if ordinary Means are not us'd to prevent it? Let this Point be a little consider'd, and I think there will be no need of pressing it with farther Reasons. Let us suppose but a real Desire of Salvation, and a Fear of Miscarrying, even such a Desire, and such a Fear, as carry on People in the most inconsiderable *St. i. c.* of Law, or other Worldly Pretences, and this Method will be soon judg'd reasonable, and not require Arguments to encourage the Practice.

The Motives for it are so very substantial, that for the better Accomplishment of this Prescription, those, who have studied the best Helps for Perfection, have requir'd of their Followers, to set apart some Days, every Year, for a Spiritual Retreat, wherein, being separated from all Worldly, or even Common Conversation, they may with greater Freedom of Mind, enquire into the true State of their Souls, and by frequent Conferences, with their Director, have Opportunity of coming to such a Knowledge of themselves, as may be without Disguise. And this is not the Practice of Religious only, but of many others; and

and 'tis recommended by *S. Francis Sales* to all. It can be esteem'd no less than necessary for such, as, after a Life of Vice or Distraction, resolve seriously upon beginning a new Life; and for others, who desire to recover themselves from the ill Habits of Indifferency and Sloth, and must certainly be of great Advantage to all. Great numbers are in such happy Circumstances, that nothing can be wanting for their performing this so profitable an Exercise, but a good Will, and a good Resolution: And if many of those, who think it impracticable, would but reflect, how often they will not be at home to receive Company, how often they retire for Air, how easily they exclude Visits and Conversation, when Health requires it; they might hence discover, that a Spiritual Retreat is very possible, if they were but as much Solicitous for their Soul's Good, and for Heaven, as they are for finding Opportunities of following their own Humors, and pleasing themselves. Whatever therefore their Excuses be, I fear, they will scarce be allow'd in any: But as for Church-men, whose Profession is so Holy, as requiring the greatest Perfection, and whose whole Life ought, in some measure, to come up to this Method of Recollection, I

think it cannot but be a Reproach to their Conscience, if they are either wanting in Will or Contrivance, for doing that, which they must recommend to others, as the greatest Help of Virtue, and they know to be the most effectual Expedient for recovering whatever has been lost by conversing with the World.

In this Instruction of the frequent Examen of Conscience, have all Christians a sure Means for preparing themselves, for giving in their Accompts to God. I wish only, that as all are apprehensive of Death and Judgment; so now, while they have it in their Power, they would do something, for lessening the Terrors of them; and not boldly run on, till they have nothing more in their Power, but to condemn their own Blindness and Despair. Do thou, O God, inspire thy Servants, with such Resolutions, as our present unhappy State requires; teach us to be Wise for Eternity: And how can that be, if being to render an Account of our Lives to thee, we think nothing of making our Accounts, till the Hour comes, when they are to be call'd for?

Second

Second Sunday of Advent.

ON last *Sunday* I shew'd the Necessity of Christians calling themselves often to an Account, and examining into their Lives; now I must enquire, what is to be the Matter of this Examen, and what the Manner of making it.

The first Part of this Examen must be, in looking over the Commandments of God, and making a particular Enquiry, how far they observe this Law, and how far they transgress it; for since keeping the Commandments is the surest Argument of the Love of God, and the Condition fixt for gaining Life Eternal, none can have true Peace of Conscience, or the Hopes of future Happiness, but as far as they see themselves obedient to this Law, or discover a sincere Desire of Reforming whatever they find in themselves contrary to it. All Christians therefore must carefully compare their Lives with the Rule of Life; and not only pray, that God would lead them in the way of his Commandments, but examin, how far they keep them; and this is so much for their Advantage, that to bate some part of usual Prayer, for allowing time for this, is more advisable, than to put by this

Exercise for sitting up a set Number of Prayers.

In this Examen is to be consider'd, first, the Outward Man; not that it is the Principal, but that it is the more easily observ'd: As to this, they are to reflect, in what Particulars they give Offence, or ill Example to others, and how they do them Injury, either by Words or Actions; how they provoke, or make them uneasie; for as it was the Commendation of Zachary and Elizabeth, that they walk'd in all the Commandments *sine querela*, without giving to any Occasion of Complaint; so all ought to endeavor to come up to the same Character, and upon a just Examen of themselves, use Means for retrenching in themselves whatever they can apprehend to give to others a just Occasion of Complaint.

Then is to be examin'd the Inward Man; and they are to consider the Disorder of their Passions, Desires, Thoughts and Inclinations; what is their Strength; what their greatest Violence; which is most Powerful in them; where is their Principal Difficulty, in being govern'd by Reason and Faith. They are to consider how far Pride, Vanity, the Desire of Esteem, Interest or Covetousness, prevails in them, how far these carry them beyond

yond their Duty, or are the Motives in what they say or do. And whatever they can discover to be Sinful or Irregular, it is to be set down in particular, as part of the Task they at present have upon their Hands, and to which they are to apply their Thoughts and Endeavors for a Reformation. For the better accomplishing this, they are to reflect, what are the Principal Occasions or Provocations of their Disorders, and resolve upon putting themselves under a greater Restraint, as to such as are voluntary, and upon better Government, in regard of those, which are unavoidable. They are to reflect again, what may be the proper Means for overcoming themselves, and take Advice with the most experienc'd upon this Subject; and, if what they have hitherto tried, proves ineffectual, they must still continue their Search and Endeavors, and try farther: For, as he that lays a Foundation, must see for Materials to finish what he has begun; so all Christians, having undertaken to raise a Building, and fit themselves to be a part of the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, must consider upon what is necessary for finishing this Work, and not lay by their Design, upon any Discouragements, but continue, and add to their Labors, till the

nearer Hopes of accomplishing their Design carries them on with more Comfort.

They are still farther to examin, whether they are Sincere in the Desire of overcoming themselves, and whether they can give Proof of this Sincerity, by having consider'd, and resolv'd upon making use of the best Helps in the Amendment they propose. It is a good Sign of their being Sincere, if they inform themselves of the best qualified Director, such, whose Knowledge and Zeal for Virtue gives them the greatest Hopes of finding Benefit under his Conduct. But, if knowing such an one, they purposely decline him, upon the Apprehension of his being likely to be too much in earnest with them, and make choice of some other; either one, who knows nothing of their Circumstances and State of Soul, or one, who will not make Enquiry into it; this is an Argument of their Insincerity, and they have reason to suspect their being false to God and themselves, in all the Proposals they make of Repentance or Amendment. For if he cannot be esteem'd in earnest to desire his Health, who applies himself to such a Physician, who neither knows nor enquires into his Distemper, and will not prescribe what is necessary for his Cure: And if he can-

not

not be thought in earnest to desire his Journey's end, who takes such a Guide, who will in Silence let him go out of the way: So those Christians, who make the like unreasonab!e Choice, in regard of their Soul, may persuade themselves, that they desire to amend, but certainly 'tis all Delusion, since there is not the least sign of any such Desire in them.

But because the just Examination of the Passions depends so much on the Judgment, that if this be not rightly form'd, the Account, when made up, must have necessarily very considerable Mistakes; therefore must the Judgment it self be very deliberately consider'd, to discover, upon what Principles it generally gives in its Verdict of things that are brought before it. The Question must therefore be put, Whether the Gospel be its Rule? Whether it judges of all things, as influenc'd by Faith, or by Sense; whether with relation to this World or the next? Whether it be provided with true Ideas of Charity, Humility, Meekness, Justice, &c? Whether it be prepossess'd with Passion, Prejudices, or undue Affections? Whether Education, Custom, or Example over-rule it? Whether Self-love, Desire of Esteem, Convenience, Interest or Pleasure, have an

Ascendant over it? A due Enquiry must be made into all these Particulars: For if the Judgment be not regulated by good Principles, all Examination will be, in a manner, useless, and it is not qualified for passing a just Sentence of the State of the Soul, or of any thing else, that is propos'd to it. It is this want of the Judgment being thus duly form'd, is the general Occasion, that so many Christians live on under a Peace of Conscience, in such Practices, as are most unwarrantable in a Christian Life; that they esteem that their Misfortune, which is their Happiness; that they rejoice in what ought to be the Occasion of mourning; that they grasp with Earnestness at what is most hurtful to them; that they are afraid of what is their greatest Good; that they embrace Enemies for Friends, and are as solicitous to decline their best Friends, as if they were the worst of Enemies. Here is the first rise of all those Mistakes, by which Christians chose Darkness rather than Light, and of that last fatal Miscarriage, in finding Eternal Misery their Portion, when they have liv'd in the false Hopes of Happiness.

And

And upon this Ground it is, that there is a Necessity that all Christians, when they undertake the Examination of their Conscience, should beg the Light of the Holy Ghost to direct them in it; for certainly, to discern the true State of their Souls, is a Matter of that Difficulty, and subject to so many Mistakes, that it can never be duly perform'd, if by the Light of Heaven they are not particularly assisted in it. And therefore, as there are none so wretchedly deceiv'd in themselves, as those Presuming ones; who having a great Opinion of their own Abilities, think nothing more evident than themselves to themselves; so there are none in a better way of making a true Judgment of their own Interior State, than those, who humbly distrust of their own Endeavors, and apprehensive of Mistakes, earnestly petition for Direction from above, and with *David* cry out, *De mibi Intellectum*: Lord, give me Understanding, give me Grace to understand aright. For thus taking God for their Guide, they have his Hand to secure them from their own Darkness, and from the greater Danger of their own false Lights.

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Those, who thus call in Heaven to their Help, and by the Assistance of its Grace having done their best, to deliver their Judgment from all Delusion, must carry their Examination yet one step farther, by making a strict Enquiry into the Obligations of their State, and see how far they comply with them; because 'tis very possible, that many Christians, with a passing Glance, may look over the Commandments, and see no reason of Disquiet, or Apprehension of God's Displeasure against them, and yet to be under a manifold Guilt, for not discharging those particular Duties, which are the Obligations of their State, and which they, upon entering into it, undertook to satisfy. Here then must all those, who have any degree of Dignity or Power in Church or State, enquire, what are the Obligations annexed to it, and how near they come up to such Duties, or are wanting to them. Here must Parents and Masters, Husbands and Wives, Children and Servants, consider their Particular Obligations belonging to them, of which God will demand an Account. Here must Lawyers examin, whether they Neglect or Oppress their Clients: All, who are in Trust, whether they are Faithful and Just to what they have undertaken: Traders, whether they

they use no Frauds, nor Over-reach any :
 All who deal with Money, whether Cove-
 tousness does not prevail to the wrong-
 ing of others. Thus must every one, in
 their several Stations, bring themselves to
 the Examen; and if this be perform'd
 with a Sincere Mind, such as is not afraid,
 but desirous of finding out all the Errors
 of its own ways, the Christian Soul will
 come by degrees to have the truest Pro-
 spect of it self, and by the Practice of
 this discovering Method, cannot fail of
 obliging Heaven to its Assistance, in o-
 pening the Treasure of those Graces,
 which are necessary for overcoming
 whatever is found contrary to its Eternal
 Interest. Lead, O God, I beseech thee,
 all that profess thy Name, into this en-
 quiring Way, that, by this seasonable In-
 dustry they may come to the true Know-
 ledge of themselves, and discover all the
 Impediments of Salvation: Take from
 them all Sloth and Insensibility, that
 they may not live on under a false Secu-
 rity, but that having a true Sense of what
 it is to lose thee, they may be both
 watchful to see, and solicitous to remove
 whatever renders them at present displea-
 sing to thee, and is capable of making
 them hereafter the Objects of thy Eternal
 Wrath.

Third Sunday of Advent.

IN the foregoing Instructions has been shewn the Necessity and Manner of all Christians calling themselves to an Account, and enquiring into all their Ways; but because this cannot be well done, except they have a due Knowledge of the Christian Doctrin, in which they are to learn both the Truths, and the Law and Will of God, therefore I come now to press this Duty to them.

The Christian Doctrin, of which I here speak, is that which is contain'd in the Ordinary Catechisms; and to shew the Necessity of knowing it, I need no more, than mention the Principal Parts; for this will be enough to make those blush with Confusion of their own Neglect, who either know it not themselves, or take no Care, that such as are under their Charge, be duly instructed in it.

The first Part is that, which contains the Principal Mysteries of our Faith, and is the Explication of the *Cred.* The second contains the Principal Means of obtaining God's Blessings, and is the Explication of the *Lord's Prayer.* The third contains the Rules of Charity, teaching

us the Love of God, and of our Neighbor, and is the Explication of the *Commandments*. The fourth contains the Particular Means of the new Law, for obtaining the Grace of God, answerable to the different Necessities we have of it, and is the Explication of the *Sacraments*. The last shews the Effect of our Misery, in the Transgression of the Divine Law, and is the Explication of *Sin*. Now let Christians reflect upon these Particulars, and tell me, if they can call themselves Christians, who live ignorant of them. Are they Christians, who know not the Mysteries of Christianity, who, when God has wrought such great things in the Works of his Mercy and Power for them, take not the Care, even to enquire, what they are? Are they Christians, who wanting all things from the Hand of God, learn not how to ask for what they want? Are they Christians, who being oblig'd to observe the Law of God, do not inform themselves, what this Law is, and what the Obligations of it are, either to God, or to their Neighbor? Are they Christians, who when the Divine Mercy has provided them Means for obtaining Grace according to their Necessities, are not solicitous to make Enquiry, what these Means are, or what are the Conditions

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requir'd on their Parts, for rendering them effectual? Lastly, Are they Christians, who knowing, that their Eternal Lot depends on this one Point, of making their Peace with God, know only how to sin, but take no Pains to see, how provoking their Sins are, or what may be necessary for making Atonement for them?

There is no Necessity of answering to these Questions; for certainly the Ignorance of what is contain'd in the *Creed*, in the *Lord's Prayer*, in the *Commandments*, and of what the *Sacraments* and *Sin* are, at the first Thought, must appear so contrary to the first Notion, every one must have of a Christian, that there is nothing but *not Thinking*, can give any Hopes of Christianity being there, where there is this Ignorance. At least, the State of a Soul going on peaceably under this general Darknefs, must appear so unhappy, that there are none so otherwise ignorant, but by only looking, they must see how desperate it is. For what is the first Sight? It is a Soul unconcern'd for all, that belongs to its Eternal Good; a Soul, that knows not the Truths and Mercies of God; a Soul, that desires not to understand the Will of God; a Soul, that is not Sollicitous to ask or obtain the Grace of God. And in what Preparation is such

Such a Soul for having God its Eternal Possession, when it has so little Regard for him, whom before all things, and above all things, it is oblig'd to seek? The Account thus made up is dismal, and this Character has nothing Christian in it; and yet, I cannot but fear, it is truly theirs, who, knowing not the Christian Doctrin, take no Pains to be better instructed in it. And their State cannot be much better, who having Children and Servants in their Charge, are not careful to seek Means, for their being taught that, which alone can secure them against Everlasting Misery; but barbarously leave them to the Effects of their own natural Weakness and Ignorance, and to all the Advantages, which the Devil and the World must thus necessarily have over them, to their Eternal Ruin.

Hence, *first*, may I those Pastors grieve at the Account they must give, who undertaking the Charge of Souls, and having many of this number, both Young and Old, Ignorant of the most Essential Parts of the Christian Doctrin, content themselves with a hasty saying of Prayers, but take no Pains, in giving them better Instruction, either in the Worship of God, or in the Knowledge of the many Obligations they have, both to God, their Neighbor, and their own Souls.

2dly.

2^{dly}. Those Masters of Families may make some Judgment of themselves, who are not careful, to provide their Family of such a Pastor, who will discharge this part of his Duty; or only make use of such an one, who being otherwise engag'd, comes so seldom, that it is impossible, in such Intervals, either Children, Servants, or others of the Flock, should retain whatever Instructions are given them. If a streight Fortune be the occasion of their not making a better Provision, it must be receiv'd, as a lawful Excuse; but then they ought to supply this Want, by the strict Observance of good Disciplin, and seeing, that the Exercises of Praying and Reading Books of Instruction be duly perform'd on *Sundays* and *Holidays*, and that the Examination of such as are most Ignorant, be recommended to some one in particular, whose Knowledge and Piety fits them for this Work of Mercy. But if the reason of their Family being not under the Care of one, who has a more Apostolic Spirit, and is in Circumstances of giving a more constant Attendance to his Charge, be because of their own little Zeal, or out of a Covetous Humor, for the lesser Expence; this has so much of Guilt in it, that all the Miscartiages of Children, Servants,

vants, &c. occasion'd for want of Instruction, must fall upon them, whose Duty it was to have them better taught. And if in looking over their Expences, they find Vanity and Intemperance largely supplied, and a yearly Salary allow'd to one or more, under their Roof, for the daily Care of their Horses and Dogs; this will shew the Unreasonableness of their pretended Good Husbandry, who think not of sparing, but only, when Piety calls for their Purse, and are for feeding the Beasts of State, and of Sport, while Souls must starve for good Management. Where this is the Practice, 'tis easily guessing how such Christians make up their Accompts; or rather, how they shuffle and deceive themselves, that they may not see, how their Accompts stand; but however, they may gloss it to themselves, they cannot so wholly blind their Reason, but they must have some Glimpse of their acting against Piety, against Charity, and against Justice. This, at least, is too evident to others, and, without any Spirit of Prophecy, they may easily foretel, that Religion cannot there stand long, where it lies open, without any Defence, to all that is capable of weak'ning or undermining it.

it. The many Instances of Confusion and Impiety, brought in by these Steps, make this to be Foresight, rather than Fear; and if those, who are in this unhappy Way, would but glance at this List, and see the manifold Miseries entail'd upon Generations, it would be enough to make them change their Method, if they have any true Love for themselves, or Compassion for those that come after them.

But however, if Pastors and Masters are careless in their Duty, this will not excuse those, who are under their Charge, if they are ignorant of what they ought to know. If those, who are to feed them, do not give them Meat, they must not stand still, and starve, but use their best Industry, to provide for themselves. They must apply themselves to good Books, and be constant in reading such, as shall be judg'd, upon asking Advice, most proper for them: A little every Day will be a great Improvement in the Year; especially if they are careful to take more time in them on *Sundays* and *Holidays*, when few can pretend so much Business, but with some Contrivance, they may find Leisure for doing this Good to themselves. Those will have

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the greatest Difficulty, who cannot read; and for this let Parents consider what they have to answer, who create this Difficulty to their Children, by giving them no better Education: But however, even these may find some Remedy for their Ignorance, from the Charity of others with whom they live; since there are scarce any Families, but some one may be found in them, whose Piety may be prevail'd on, to read a Chapter to those, who cannot do this for themselves. This is so great a Work of Mercy, and God has given such Encouragement to it, in his Promises made to those, who instruct others unto Justice, that none, who desire to do Good to themselves, can refuse this Charity to others: For if Eternal Happiness will be their Reward, who feed the Hungry, or give a Cup of Water to the Thirsty; how much more will it be their Recompence, who give Relief to these Hungry and Thirsty Souls, which are ready to perish for want of Spiritual Food?

Thus there can scarce be suppos'd any Circumstances so very bad, but Means may be found, for knowing so much of the Christian Doctrine, as is necessary

necessary to help them on in the Way of Salvation; and if the little Bulk of those Catechisms be consider'd, which, in two Sheets of Paper, contain all that is of Necessity to be known, where can be the Excuse for not knowing it? Who can pretend, they have not Capacity or Opportunity for learning it? If it were a large Volume, that was recommended to them, there might be some Plea against it; but as it is, there cannot easily be any other, besides that of Sloth and Neglect, which will not be allow'd by him, who has not only given an Example for taking Pains for Heaven, but has likewise laid down his Life for our Salvation; and what then must be the Confusion of Sloth before such a Redeemer? But if there be any in such unhappy Circumstances, that, notwithstanding their best Endeavours, they can find no Convenience for accomplishing this Work, in learning what is the Duty of every Christian to know; they must not make this their Excuse for living in Ignorance, but are bound to change their Place, and seek some other, tho' with their Temporal Loss, where they may be instructed in all the necessary Duties of Salvation;
for

for this being the End of our Creation, all Temporal Considerations must yield to this; and they, who will not do so much for Heaven, will never come to it. Do thou inspire, O Lord, thy Servants with a true Sense of their Duty; and since none can truly serve Thee, that know not Thy Truths, Thy Mercies, and Thy Law; make all Industrious in this Knowledge, and let it be a Reproach to their Conscience; who being skill'd in the things of this World, are contented in being Ignorant of Thee.

Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Or on St. Thomas's Day, if it comes before the Fourth Sunday.

IT is necessary, that all Christians be duly instructed in that part of the Christian Doctrine, which is the Explication of the Creed, Lord's Prayer, Commandments, and Sacraments: But this is not enough, because it is not sufficient for a Christian, to be able to give an Account of his Faith and his Law; but he is bound likewise to have

have such a lively Sense of the Spirit of the Gospel, by which he is to live, that this may be able to direct him in all the Actions of Life, and secure him from those many Snares, to which he is expos'd from the Subtily of an Industrious Enemy, from his own Corruption, and the Flatteries of an insinuating World.

The ordinary Means of obtaining and preserving this Knowledge, is by frequent Hearing or Conversing with those, whose Spirit is truly form'd according to the Gospel; and by reading the Gospel it self, or such Books, which deliver the Principles, and plainly lay open the true Spirit of the Gospel. There may be Occasions of Hearing or Confering with such as are Spiritual, and these ought not to be neglected: But the most general Method must be by the Practice of Reading good Books; and this I judge so necessary, that I think the Spirit of the Gospel cannot be kept up in such a Soul, where this Practice is neglected.

The reason is, *first*, because this Spirit is a particular Gift of God, and depends so much on the Support of his Grace, that it cannot subsist without it; and it cannot be expected, that God

will

will bestow his Grace on those, who are so Careless or Slothful, as not to do that on their Parts, which is necessary for obtaining what they expect from him. God has engag'd his Promise to those, that Ask, that Seek, that Labor, that are Industrious, in using the Means of Grace; but to Slothful and Careless Christians there is no such Promise made, and their State is declar'd to be like that of the neglected Field, which is to be overgrown with Thistles, with Weeds and Thorns. Many Parables are related by Christ, in which are shewn the unhappy Effects of Sloth and Neglect; and those, who look for better, cannot have their Hopes in Christ, and must depend on another Gospel, and not on his; and how then are these likely to obtain his Spirit?

- Secondly, Because, whatever a Christian knows, tho' it be the whole Letter of the Gospel, yet the Nature of our Memory is such, that if it be not frequently renew'd, it soon loses whatever Idea's have been imprinted in it. So that, as we see Languages and Sciences lost for want of Exercise; so if a Christian be not so Industrious, as to Quicken and Revive the better Impressions of the Gospel, and the sacred Sci-

ence of Salvation, these will, by degrees, decay, and so lose their Vigor, as to become in a manner useless in the Direction of the Spiritual Life.

Thirdly, Because Corruption is so natural, and our Heart so open, to the more agreeable Impressions of the World, that if it be not almost daily establish'd in the Truths of the Gospel, and made sensible of its greatest Interest being not in Temporal, but Eternal Goods; the Love and Distractions of the World will gain such a Possession of it, that its whole Thoughts will run this way, and the Thoughts of Eternity, if not wholly smother'd, will have little more Influence, than the Suggestions of a Dream. Let but the Covetous, the Worldly, the Idle, the Vicious Christians be consider'd. These, if ask'd, will tell you, they believe in God, in Christ, and his Gospel; and that there are Eternal Rewards for the Good, and Everlasting Punishments for such, as forsake the Law of God; let their Education be examin'd, and it will be discover'd, that many of these, who now are *Libertines*, have been formerly of very regular Discipline, and even Exemplar for their Piety; and yet now Believing, as they did before,

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all their Faith and Knowledge is not powerful enough to restrain them within the Bounds of Duty, nor to be a Barr against the worst of Scandals. And is not the Reason Obvious? Their Faith and Knowledge of Eternal Things is now grown weak, they have not us'd Means for keeping them up lively and vigorous; the Love of Temporal Satisfaction has gain'd upon them, the Bent of their Inclinations run strongly to what is Sensual and Earthly, this they value, this they seek; they cannot think themselves happy, but in this Enjoyment; and what Wonder then is it, that Heaven is contemn'd, whilst Earth is thus eagerly grasp'd at?

Fourthly, Because, tho' we suppose Christians so resolute, as to keep themselves disengag'd from all that can be esteem'd Vicious, yet the Ordinary Business of Life, and those Employments, which are justified by Necessity, are so great a Distraction to the Mind, that if there be not some Exercises of Piety to balance it, it will be insensibly drawn from God, and come to that Solitude for what is worldly, as seldom to think, and much less to be concern'd for what is Eternal. And where Business is not the Employment

of the time, but a plentiful Fortune dispences with all this Concern, here the Christian is expos'd to so many Dangers of Idleness and Ease, to the Flatteries of Vanity, Prodigality, and Immoderate Divertisements, with a Train of other seemingly Innocent Entertainments, that if due Care be not taken, by frequent Reading the best Books, to confirm the Mind against these pleasing Assaults, and to weaken the Force of these Objects, by opposing against them the weight of Eternal Goods, the whole Man will be surpriz'd with the Love of what is sensible, and this Love will make him so Ingenious, in finding Reasons to widen the Way of God's Commandments, to dispence with the most necessary Duties, and to raise Scandals against those, who condemn his Ways, that there can be nothing less apprehended, than for this to end in a general Renouncing of all that is Good.

Lastly, Because the Best, and all others, being subject to great Changes in the Temper of their Mind, to variety of Trials and Temptations, they may be often at a Loss, in not reflecting upon the Means proper in their respective Circumstances, or upon the
Motives

Motives most effectual, for spurring them on to such Vigorous Endeavors, as their Case may require, if by frequent Reading they do not give new Light to their Understanding, and new Life to their Spirit. And then, as to those, who live engag'd in unjust Practices, or unlawful Liberties, is not Reading Good Books the most assured Means for awak'ning their Conscience, for giving them a Sight of their Danger, and a Sense of their Duty? The great Numbers of those, who by this way have receiv'd the first Glimpse of Heavenly Light, and by following it, have been not only reclaim'd from a Worldly and Vicious Life, but likewise become eminent for Sanctity, and are now Glorious Saints in Heaven, is Demonstration enough of the great Advantage of the Method here prescrib'd.

And therefore, from these Reasons, we may here conclude, that this Exercise of frequent Reading or Hearing the Gospel, and other Spiritual Books, which teach the Doctrine of the Gospel, is necessary for all Christians, and that, whether they are in the State of Religion, or of the World; whether engag'd in Business, or disengag'd from it.

whether Slothful or Vigorous, whether Ignorant or Learned, whether Scandalous Sinners, or Edifying in all Holiness, this Method of constant Reading what is for their Instruction, must be of great Advantage to them, and the Neglect of it can be nothing less than the Neglect of Salvation.

But now if the Question be ask'd, When and how often it is advisable for Christians thus to Read? I put them in Mind, that the Gospel and other Spiritual Books, are the Food and Physic of the Soul, and then ask them, How often they are to take Food and Physic? And the Answer is, When they want it: As often as the Body is in want of Nourishment, and Distempers are either to be prevented or cur'd. And now I demand of them, Whether their Souls be not every Day in want of Nourishment, as much as their Bodies? Whether they do not every Day find Infirmities, Indispositions, or Distempers, such as require immediate Help, either for abating or removing them? Then certainly, to such, as have a Concern for supporting their Souls in Spiritual Health and Strength, it must be advisable to Read every Day, and oftener, if Circumstances will allow it.

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On *Sundays* and *Holidays* they ought to take a double Portion; and because these are Days for meeting in Public, Pastors cannot perform a greater Charity to themselves and Flock, than to read to their People assembled such Books, as they judge most proper for their Instruction, especially, if they are careful to do it so Gravely, Leisurely, and Distinctly, as becomes the Occasion, and may be understood with Respect by the Hearers. And in Families, that are not thus constantly provided, this Part ought to be supplied by the Master's Care; that thus Servants and others, who are daily provided with Bread, may likewise be duly help'd with Spiritual Food, for the Nourishment of their Souls. This is so just, and otherwise so necessary a Proposal, that, I fear, those, who are the Heads of Families, and yet will not take this Care of them, to have it done, either by themselves, or some other, have not a true Sense of their Charge, and have Reason to consider, for their own sakes, whether this Neglect of others does not proceed from a Neglect of themselves.

Wherefore, upon the whole Matter duly consider'd, I cannot but press with Earnestness this Exercise of frequent Reading Spiritual Books to all, who have

a Faith of a Life to come, and desire to have part with the Blessed. This has been the Practice of those, who are already in the Possession of Happiness; it was by this way they came to the Knowledge of God and themselves, and became skill'd in the Holy Science of working out their Salvation, by seeking and serving God, and overcoming the World; and there is no surer way for those, who desire to follow them. And since this is the great End of our Creation, and therefore ought to be the great Business of all, are not they severely to be censur'd, who spend their Leisure Hours in Reading over Volumes of Romances and Plays, and thus fill their Heads and Hearts with the vain Learning of Chimera's and Dreams; when at the same time many of these scarce know the first Rudiments of a Christian Life, and the most learned of them do not see the half part of the Vanity of their own Hearts, or the Dangers of their idle Disposition? And are not they as much to be condemn'd, who, after the Days of Worldly Dissipation and Business, can find no more profitable Entertainment, than to run into idle Company and Clubs at Night, and there to seek Relief by Change of Follies; when their Minds are already too much distracted

sted and drawn, even to a Forgetfulness of God, stand in need of better Conversation, to recover them from their Distraction, and bring them back to the Thoughts of the only Necessary, which is the Salvation of their Souls? Not that I reprove a moderate Divertisement, but only condemn their unequal Distribution, who take Hours for unnecessary Recreation, and cannot afford one half Hour in the Day for Reading what may so much contribute to their Eternal Good. For this is acting so contrary to the Reason of a Christian, which is Faith, that I cannot see, how it can consist with any Peace of Conscience, except it be one so insensible, that it can lie unconcern'd under any Burthen.

These then ought to begin another Method, and all others ought to be punctual in this Exercise; many have Excuses, but if these, when examin'd, come to be discover'd, nothing better than Idleness, and want of being in earnest, they will find no Favor, but with Hypocrites; and 'tis well if their Neglect provoke not God wholly to forsake them. Enlighten, O God, I beseech thee, thy Servants, that having so fair Opportunities of improving in the Science of Salvation, they may not be blind in the Concern of their

58 *St. Thomas, Apostle,*

greatest Interest, but by daily using Means for knowing themselves and thee, they may have the Assistance of thy Grace, and find thee at the end of their Labors.

St. Thomas, Apostle, Dec. 21.

Or Fourth Sunday of Advent, if it comes after St. Thomas.

TO have a true Sense of the Spirit of the Gospel, is necessary for all Christians, who desire to walk by it, since 'tis unreasonable to think it can be a Rule to any, who know it not. But however, it is not enough to know it; for the Knowledge of it, without Practice, is only like a Barren Seed, which can be of little Value to him, who looks for Fruit, and orders all those Trees to be cut down, and rooted out of his Vineyard, on which Fruit is not found. And therefore, it must be every Christian's Business, to bring forth Fruit; that is, to live according to that Knowledge, which he has of the Spirit of Christ; and this being the Effect of the same Spirit, by that Grace, which he pours forth into the Hearts of the Faithful, and which gives to them
Spiritual

Spiritual Life and Strength, all Christians are to seek this Grace, that by help of it, they may, not only know what is their Duty, but likewise live, according to what they know. Now the most effectual Means for obtaining the Grace of God, being Prayer, and the Sacraments, it must be their greatest Interest, to be Industrious in thus seeking it; since Grace being the Gift of God, it must be sought that way, which he has ordain'd for their obtaining it.

What Prayer is, and the Effects of it being fully declar'd in so many Books, I need not here repeat it: I only press Christians to be Punctual and Careful in the Practice of it. In the first place, to be Punctual in saying their Prayers, so as to have Times fixt for them, and not to be easily put by; because to observe Order, is one of the greatest Helps to Virtue; it is by the strict Observance of this, Religious Houses have one great Advantage above those in the World; all Governments are maintain'd by Order, and if the Lives of Private Persons are not brought, in some Measure, under Rule, no great Good can be expected from them, but all will be left to Chance; and this is not the Way to do any thing well, because this is an Argument of the

Business

60 *St. Thomas, Apostle,*

Business being of no great Concern, and of too much Indifferency in those, who are to do it. As therefore, in every Business of Importance, there is a sort of Earnestness attending it, and a Solitude to prevent all Disappointments; so the same ought to be in Prayer; because it is an Exercise, on which the Good of the Soul, and its Eternal Interest depends; and where this Solitude is not, there needs no other Proof of the Soul, being very much indisposed, in not making that its Concern, which ought to be its greatest.

Thus then must every Christian conclude himself under this Indisposition, who has not his time for Prayer, who lets Sleep or Sloth take this Time from him, who makes Delays, upon every trifling Thought, or inconsiderable Business, that occurs; for since none will allow of this in any Servant, nor in themselves, where their Interest is concern'd, 'tis a Demonstration, that such a Soul has too great an Indifferency, in regard of Prayer, and is not much concern'd, whether it be said or no. And this cannot be the Judgment of those, who either have a Sense of their own Interior Poverty and Wants, or of their necessary Dependance on Gods

and to mention. A man is said to be from

December 21. 3 64

from whose Hand alone they can be supplied.

But if the Time be appointed for Prayer, and as duly observ'd; as Circumstances will allow, then, secondly, Care is to be us'd for saying it well; and since this cannot be, but by the Assistance of God, the first part of Prayer ought to be, to beseech God to give this Assistance, by raising the Heart towards Heaven, and delivering the Mind from all Vain, Perverse and Unseasonable Thoughts: This is to be the Preparation of all Prayer; and those, who cannot allow Time for this, only make haste to do ill.

This being done, the *Posture*, in time of Prayer, ought to be of a Petitioner, truly sensible of his own Wants, and of the Infinite Majesty of God, to whom he addresses himself; and the *Manner* of saying them, is to have Regard to the same: Hence must be disapprov'd all sorts of unbecoming Postures, which are the Effect of Sloth, too much Niceness, or of a Careless, Unthinking Humor; for there is so much of Disrespect in this, that there can be no great Hopes of moving Heaven by such Prayers, where the greater Concern seems to be for consulting Ease, than what may move God to be favorable: This, I say, is the Effect of Sloth,

62 *St. Thomas, Apostlic,*

Sloth, &c. For if Health requires it, It must be allow'd, and not censur'd. Hence likewise must be reprov'd that Hasty, Huddling way of running over Prayers, in which the Words are so much chopt or lost, that whoever should speak so, even to a Companion, would be esteem'd either a Fool or Mad; for this has so little in it of that Respect, which is due to God, that it seems more like an Affront than Adoration, and must more probably provoke his Displeasure, than excite his Mercy. It were to be wish'd therefore, that all, who present themselves before God in Prayer, would consider what they do, and perform it in such a manner, as may answer the End of Prayer; and this Consideration is certainly left out, where the whole Solitude seems to be, to say such a set number of Prayers, and to see the end of them: For what can this prevail with God, who can be no more mov'd with such a Motion of the Lips, than with the Motion of an Engine, if there be not the Fervor of an Humble and Contrite Heart to give it Life.

And this is to be the Subject of the greatest Care; for that a Devout Posture and Gravity in Prayers will be nothing better than Hypocrisie, or a Useless Formality, if it be not the Effect of a Heart, seeking

seeking God, and sensible of being unworthy of obtaining what it asks. Here then is to be the great Endeavor, To keep the Mind fixt on God, to let the Sense of its Poverty make it Earnest in Asking, the Sense of God's Majesty keep it Humble, and the Sense of past Sins make it apprehensive of a Denial; and if in this Disposition of a profound Humility, supported by Hope, the Soul can approach to God, represent its Necessities, ask for Help, and stand watchful against the Distractions of its own Weakness, or the Devil's Malice, it cannot fail of finding the Succors of Divine Grace, in the *Manner* and *Time*, as God shall know most expedient, for working out its Salvation. But in this last Point the Christian must be resolute, not to be tir'd with the repeated Effects of his own Weakness, nor with the Obstinacy of his own Evils, which will not easily be overcome, nor with any apprehended Delays, in the Grant of his Petitions: For he must always remember, that his Duty is always to persevere in his Endeavors for Amendment, and in using the Means of obtaining Grace, notwithstanding all Discouragements; but for the giving Grace, this belongs to God, and this he must leave to him: Let him then but do his own part, in seeking, even

even to the end of this Life, and be wholly resign'd as to what belongs to God, and this is the way to obtain, even more than he asks, and then to be under the secret Conduct of Grace, when he thinks he has it not.

But, besides Prayer, the Sacraments being particular Ordinances of the Divine Goodness, for conveying Grace to our Souls, the Christian, that knows his own Wants, and desires Remedy, must follow the Appointment of Heaven, and there seek it, where God has ordain'd it to be found: And since this is in a more particular manner to be expected from the Blessed *Eucharist*, or the Sacrament of the last Supper, where is given to Christians the Bread of Life, for the Food and Nourishment of their Souls, it is to this Holy Banquet are to come all those, who see their great Weakness, are both convinc'd, and fearful of its Danger, and know, they have no Remedy, but in Christ. For what are People to do, that are Poor, Infirm, and expos'd to great Dangers? If they are in Love with their Evils, and desire no Relief, it is not their Concern, to hear, where it may be had. But, if they in earnest lament their Misfortunes, and sincerely desire to be deliver'd from them, they cannot then have an Assurance

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rance of Help, but they will turn their Endeavors that way, and enquire, how they may effectually obtain what is offered.

I cannot therefore but wonder at the Method of many Christians, who being exempt from the Scandalous Vices of the World, and making a Conscience of what they do, are yet so remiss, in approaching to this Table, as if they had either no Faith of its Power, or no Desire of its Help. If these are not really what they appear to be, and while they avoid the Scandal, are yet cautiously wicked, and have no Thoughts of using Endeavors for a better Life; if they only perform the External Duties of Religion, but in their Hearts are indifferent, as to the Possession of future Happiness, I then wonder not at them; because not seeking the Means of Grace, is a natural Consequence of their unhappy Indisposition. But if they are what they appear, and decline all Public Vice, upon the Hopes of Salvation, here, I confess, they give Occasion for a just Surprise; and I cannot but declare, that I think them guilty of a most notorious Neglect, which must be the effect either of Sloth, or of being false to themselves in their Proposals and Desires of being eternally happy.

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The Case is very clear; for where ever there are Proposals of any Good, and the surest Means for obtaining it are determin'd above all Exception, and without Place for Doubt, if there be not due Application made to such Means, it is an unavoidable Consequence, that either there is a notorious Sloth, which hinders the Prosecution, or that the Desires of obtaining the Good propos'd, are not Sincere. If this be granted, then it must be likewise allow'd, that since the Blessed *Eucharist* is own'd the most effectual Means of Grace, and of a Union with God, those Christians, who approach not to it, either are not hearty in their Desires of such a Union, or that their Sloth is greater than their Desires.

This Character, I think, is all theirs; who having any tolerable Instruction in the Christian Doctrine, defer their Communion from Year to Year, or little less; for whatever their Pretext be, whether being pointed at with Reproach, or the Apprehension of their Unworthiness, or being hinder'd by Business, or the great Abuse of others in their frequent Approach to the Sacrament, or whatever else it be, it is only a Cover for Sloth, and Irresolution, or an Argument of not being true to what they pretend to desire.

fire. Not but that there may be great
Profanation in those, that present them-
selves often Guests at this Table, out of
Custom only, or because 'tis expected, or
thro' their want of Preparation, and great
Unworthiness; and that there may be
good Reasons for many to exclude them-
selves from this Heavenly Banquet for a
time, upon the Motives of a true Humili-
ty, and a Conviction of their Unworthi-
ness: But that still there are great num-
bers, who keep at a distance from the
Communion, not out of Humility, but
Neglect; and while they reprove Abuses,
fall into others, and correct suppos'd Sa-
cristy with Irreligion. This is an Abuse
of great Extent, and I wish those, who
can suspect they are concern'd, would
call themselves to an Examen; and since
we are now stepping in to a Time, which
lays before us the Mercies of our God,
and the laborious Work of our Redempti-
on, ought not these to spur themselves on
to their Duty, and no longer bear the Re-
proach of Neglect or Sloth, in the View
of a Suffering God? Help these, I be-
seech thee, O God, and all Christians;
and since thou hast been so merciful, us,
for the Help of all our Weakness, to ap-
point the Means of Grace in Prayer, and
the Sacraments, give to all a true Sense
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of their Wants, and of their entire Dependance on thee, that from thee they may be Sollicitous to seek Remedy in the due Use of the Means, which thou hast ordained, and not abuse thy Goodness in the Contempt of the Helps thou hast given them for their Salvation.

Christmas-Day.

THIS being a Day, on which the Church renews in us the Memory of God's Infinit Love to Man, in giving his only Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, to become Man for our Redemption, we cannot better employ our Thoughts at this time, than in considering, what it is God expects from us, in return to the Love he has shew'd us. The Discovery of what this is, needs no long Enquiry; for the only Thought, of God giving himself to Man, on the Title of Justice, demands, that Man should give himself to God, and that God loving Man in so incomprehensible a manner, Man should return Love for Love, and therefore love God in the best manner he can. Whence it appears, that our present and perpetual Obligation is Charity, or the Love

Love of God, this being the only Return he expects from us, and the only Means for accomplishing what the Divine Mercy has design'd us in the Incarnation of his only Son, which is our Eternal Salvation. We must therefore now consider, What this Love of God is, and by what Marks we can best discover, whether we love God, as is demanded of us.

First, Then it is evident, that the Love of God is rooted in the Understanding, fixt in this settled Judgment; That God is Infinitely Good in Himself, and Infinitely Good to us; that He is the only Good; that all the things of this World, that are esteem'd Valuable and Good, are nothing, if compar'd to Him; and therefore, that in Justice, all ought to be left for Him.

Secondly, It is likewise evident, that if from this Conclusion, the Will be answerably affected with a Desire of seeking God, of serving, and being faithful to Him, in the Observance of his Law, and of being united to Him, herein performing his Sacred Will, and hereafter in the Eternal Possession of Him, then the Christian truly loves God, and has Reason to hope for a part in the Redemption wrought for him.

Whence

Whence it appears, that the Love of God does not consist in any Form of Words, nor in any Profession or Protestation, that can be made of loving God, nor in the Oblation a Christian may make, of giving his Life for God; nor in the Prayers he says, nor in the Adoration he gives Him; because, tho' all these, when sincerely perform'd, may be the Fruit of a Heart loving God, yet since they may be also no more than Lip-service, and the Formal Profession of a Heart disorderly bent upon the World, and preferring it to God; therefore they are all subject to Mistake, and no certain Effect or Proof of the Love of God; but, as to the External Appearance, may be found in the *Pharisee*, as much as in the true Disciple.

It appears again, that the Love of God does not consist in a Tenderness of Affection, nor in any sensible Motion of the Heart towards God; because, tho' sometimes the Love of God may be attended with these sensible Effects; yet these may sometimes be no more than the Effect of Constitution; whence it may easily happen, that upon a quickning Discourse of God, the Heart may break forth into Sighs, and the Eyes into Tears, and yet nothing of this proceed from the Love of God; but only from Softness of Temper,

per, which is capable of these Impressions, even when the Heart is habitually turn'd from God, and engag'd in the worst of Disorders.

If Charity then, or the Love of God, consists neither in any Protestation of Words, nor Form or Length of Prayer, nor in the Heart touch'd or softn'd with a sensible Affection; but in the Soul pouring it self forth towards God, faithfully serving him, sincerely seeking him, and truly thirsting to be united to him: Hence is discover'd the first Proof or Sign of the Love of God, possessing the Heart, to be in the due Observance of God's Commandments. This is the Mark, set down by Christ, *John 14. 15. If you love me, keep my Commandments. He that has my Commandments, and keeps them, he it is, that loves me. He that loves me not, keeps not my Words.* And by St. John, *1 Ep. 5. 3. This is the Charity of God, that we keep his Commandments.* To this Test then the Heart is to be brought, and no Regard is to be had to any repeated Protestation it makes of loving God, except upon Enquiry, it be found, that its great and general Solicitude is to keep the whole Man in due Subjection to the Law of God; except it keeps a Watch upon the Eyes, the Ears, the Hands, the Tongue, the Mind,

Mind, and allows of no Habitual or Willful Transgression of his Precepts: For where this Solicitude and Watchfulness is not, there is no sufficient Argument of the Love of God; because he that loves not, keeps not the Words of God.

A second Proof or Sign of the Love of God is discover'd; when the Christian, upon his most serious Reflection, ever endeavors to work his Judgment into this Persuasion, that whatever God does, in relation to him, is best for him; and hence brings himself, to approve and acquiesce in all the Ordinances or Permissions of God, and therefore, with an Humble Submission, receives all his Visits and Scourges, whether Interior or Exterior, whether in the Oppression upon his Spirits, the Uneasiness of his Temper, the Weakness of his Nature, the various Struggles and Efforts of his Corruption, the troublesome Temptations of the Devil or the World, or whatever Disadvantages he experiences in himself, and are the Occasions of frequent Abjection within himself, or Disesteem from others, or else from without, in the Loss of Health, of Ease, of Friends, of Conveniences for Life, or whatever other Troubles are given him by the ill Humors and Indiscretion of Friends, or the Malice

Malice of Enemies. Such a Universal Submission is the Effect of the Love of God ; for tho' in this State of Weakness and Corruption, it cannot be expected, that Nature should not be uneasy under such Trials, to which it is most averse, but, upon their first Approach, and afterwards should be inclin'd to complain ; yet where-ever the Love of God is, it will soon give a Check to Nature, and never cease in its Endeavors, till it has forced it to a Compliance with the Divine Appointments, and made it confess, that what God does is best. This is a necessary Consequence of the Love of God, which uniting the Soul to God, cannot bear any thing, that divides from him, and therefore cannot rest, till the Will of God becomes the Will of Man, in the Approbation of whatever he does.

A Third Proof or Sign of the Love of God is discover'd, when the Soul esteeming God, the only Good, judges it self Unhappy, in being separated from him, and much more Unhappy, in the danger of being eternally separated ; and, upon this Consideration, looks upon this Life as a Banishment, laments its own Weakness, the evil Inclinations, to which it is subject, the

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Snares of the Devil and World, to which it is daily expos'd, its own uncertain and deceitful Temper, and the infinit Dangers of Sin before it; and then Contemplating the happier State of those, who, deliver'd from these dejecting Circumstances, are in the Possession of the Eternal Good, cries out with St Paul, *Infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus!* Unhappy Man that I am; who will deliver me from the Body of this Death! Rom. 7. 14. I desire to be dissolv'd, and be with Christ: Or with David, *Wo to me, that my Banishment is prolong'd. When shall I come, and appear before the Face of God!*

This cannot fail of being the Sentiment and Desire of a Soul loving God; because tho' it may experience in it self many Inclinations to created Goods, and find Satisfaction in them; yet finding too, that all these are imperfect in themselves, subject to great Changes, that it must necessarily, one Day, be separated from them, and that the present Enjoyment is either sinful, or divert the Heart from seeking that Infinite Good, for which it was created; hence it cannot but judge it self Unhappy in whatever Happiness it here enjoys, and must be carried forward with

with Desires of coming to the Possession of that Good, which being Eternal, Pure and Unmixt, obliges the Judgment to value it, the Affections to love it, and the Will to seek it above all.

This is the Love of God, and these the Principal Marks, by which it is to be known; and till a Christian can come to discover these in his Soul, he deceives himself, if he thinks the Love of God abides in him. While therefore all Christians are encourag'd to Pray often, to frequent the Sacraments, to Fast, give Alms, and frequently to call themselves to an Account; yet they must remember, they are not to make Judgment of themselves, by what they do in these Exercises so strictly enjoin'd them; because these are only the *Means*, and not the *Sanctification*, which must justify them before God; and 'tis but too often, that the frequent Use of the *Means* may be found in Persons, where there appears but very little or none of the Fruit, which ought to be expected from them. The Principal Point therefore to be enquir'd into, is; what Signs there are of the Love of God? Whether there be a due Care in observing God's Command-

ments; a Care in mastering all Inclinations and Customs, which are contrary to the Divine Law? Whether there be an Humble Submission to his Scourges, and a Charitable Patience under the Provocations of Uneasie or Malicious Neighbors? Whether there be such Moderation, in regard of Worldly Goods, as not to tolerate any Covetous, Grasping or Unjust Practices, nor to permit any undue Affection, contrary or injurious to Duty; but all in such a Temper, that Heaven is sought by the good Use of Earth?

Where the Answer to these Queries is such, as ought to be, this is an Argument of the Love of God, which is the true Sanctification; and it is a Commendation of the Means, that are us'd, and of the good State of the Soul; but if no such Return can, with Truth, be made; but with much Prayer, much Fasting, much frequenting the Sacraments, with Sanctified Looks and Dress, there is still a Mind, subject to ungovern'd Passions, designing its own Interest in all it undertakes, easily provok'd, canker'd with Envy, embitter'd with Malice, not willing to be reconcil'd; if there be a Tongue flattering all it affects, and with Bitterness expressing

pressing its Dislikes of those, who favor not its Party or Passions; if there be a Vanity greedy of Esteem, and ever raising it self, by discommending others; if there be a Fondness of Follies, and Idle Entertainments; if, I say, with the Practice of Prayer, and other Exercises of Piety, these, or any other such Disorders, are countenanc'd or pass'd by, without due Care to reform them, then Christians ought not to have any favorable Opinion of themselves, since no Signs of the Love of God can be discover'd in them; but while they use the Means of Grace, and find not the Fruit of Grace, but of Corruption, they have Reason to apprehend their greater Guilt, in the Abuse of God's Holy Ordinances, and seeking Esteem from a counterfeit Piety.

This, I say, if there appears a voluntary or affected Connivance at such Disorders, as are contrary, or considerably injurious to the Law of God; for the the Case is far otherwise to be judg'd, if there be Surprizes only, or Returns of Weakness, such as are daily lamented, and made the daily Subject, not only of Desires, but of due Endeavors for suppressing and bringing them under Government; for in these Circum-

stances, it cannot be doubted, but the Love of God may have the Conduct of such Souls; and tho' as yet not fully possess'd, is in a way of being more perfectly establish'd in them.

If this, O God, be the Love of Thee, and these the Marks of thy Love; have we not Reason to be Solicitous in this Affair; not to deceive our selves with lying Signs, nor give Rest to our Spirit, till we can discover such a true Zeal for thy Law, such a Desire of accomplishing thy Holy Will, and of entring into the Possession of thee; that hence we may have some well-grounded Confidence of thy Love, commanding in us, and confirming to us the Character of thy true Disciples? Thou, O blessed Jesus, hast given us sufficient Encouragement in the laborious Life, which thou didst begin this Day; grant us this Grace, that thy Example may ever spur us forward to our Dury, and that thy Infinit Love to us may be the Pattern of the Love we are to have for Thee.

St. Stephen.

THIS being the Day of St. Stephen, the first Martyr, who gave us that eminent Example of True Charity to his Neighbor, as to Pray for his Enemies, and beg Mercy for those, that were stoning him to Death; we cannot have a more profitable Entertainment for this Festival, than to learn, what is the Duty God exacts from us, in loving our Neighbor.

This Duty is positively declar'd to us in the Gospel, where we are commanded to love our Neighbor as our selves. The Love then we have for our selves, is to be the Rule of the Love we ought to have for our Neighbor. As therefore we so love our selves, as to desire all Good for our selves, and to avoid whatever we apprehend to be Evil, so we ought to do the like, in regard of our Neighbor: Or, more in particular, as we desire our own Good, both in our Body, and in our Soul, and in our Temporal Substance, and in our Reputation; and in these four Points are solicitous, to avoid what seems prejudicial to us; so, in the same Particulars,

lars, we are bound to desire the Good, and have a Dislike to the Damage of every Neighbor.

But who is our Neighbor? This Question was put to Christ by the Doctor of the Law, mention'd in the Gospel, and by the Answer given him, in the Parable of the Man, that being wounded by Thieves, was pass'd by, neglected by a Priest and a *Levite*, and help'd by a *Samaritan*, it is plainly declar'd; that every one is to be esteem'd our Neighbor, who is in want of our Help; and that to confine Charity within narrower Bounds, is not agreeable to the Notion Christ gives of it.

Whence it is no evident Sign of true Charity, to love those, who love us; to help those, who help us, or with whom we have any Tie of Interest or Dependance; for that this may be no more, than what Publicans and Heathens, and even the Beasts do, and may be therefore the Work only of Nature, without any reference to the Command of God, or the Reward of Everlasting Life. But it is a good Mark of true Charity, when a Christian observing any in want of his Help, readily gives it, without asking any Question, of *Who*, or *Whence*, or of *What Nation* or *Religion* they are; and upon

upon discovering him to be either a Public or Private Enemy, does not, upon this, withhold his Hand, but charitably gives him the Assistance he wants.

This is the Charity describ'd by Christ in the Parable of the good *Samaritan*, who stretch'd forth a Compassionate Arm to the Wounded Man, tho' he saw him to be a *Jew*, to whom he could have no Affection, as being divided from him, both by National Interest and Religion; and therefore it is such as this, which must be the Gift of God, and to which the Promise is made of Life Eternal. For this is the Love of our Neighbor, not arising from any Natural Affection, or from any Motive of Interest or Dependance, but according to God's Will, and for God's sake; because he is the Creator of God, made after his Image, and redeem'd by him; and hence this Charity thus rooted in God, and seeking him, is call'd Divine. This Charity may be exercis'd, in regard of Relations and Friends, if these being in want of our Assistance, the Christian raising his Thoughts above Nature, considers them as Persons in Distress, and that it is God's Will he should contribute to their Relief; for if he proceeds on these Motives, such

Charity directed by the Will of God, must be esteem'd Divine. Again, tho' it be less to be suspected towards Strangers or Enemies, yet even when these are the Subject of it, it may sometimes be no more than Natural, and fail of being Divine. As when Persons are either mov'd to it by a sort of vain Generosity, which considering Cruelty, as the effect of a Mean and Base Spirit, seeks Esteem, and values it self, upon doing Good to an Enemy; or when Persons are of that Compassionate Disposition, that they cannot either hear of, or see any Object of Misery, but they are bent with as strong an Inclination to relieve, as others, of a more unhappy Temper, are to rejoice in the suffering of their Enemy. For tho' in both these Cases, there is the whole Appearance of the most perfect Charity; yet, when it is consider'd, that one is the effect of Vanity, or Ambition, and the other, of no more than a Natural Temper, it is plain, that Corruption gives Life to the one, and Nature to the other; and that neither is the Exercise of that Charity, which begins in God's Will, and ends in his Glory.

It must be acknowledg'd indeed, that a Compassionate Temper is a good Disposition to the Practice of true Charity; because there is not that Difficulty to be overcome, which those find, who are of a rough Constitution, and have little Sense of what others suffer; and yet, as no Streams run higher than their Spring, so if this more Compassionate Temper does not raise it self by Divine Motives, above Nature, all the Charity, it practices, will be no more than natural, the same in the Christian, as in the Heathen; and tho' it may have a Temporal Reward, such as the *Egyptian* Midwives receiv'd, for sparing the Male-Children of the *Hebrews*; yet it cannot expect that Eternal Recompence, promis'd to that Charity, which is the Effect of Grace, and done upon Eternal Motives of pleasing God, and doing His Holy Will. And now, tho' for so doing, those of the better Temper have the Advantage; because Nature inclining them to the Action, they want no more, than to direct their Hearts towards God, and making Grace supplant Nature, offer to him what they do; yet those of the harder Constitution have this Advantage, that, if upon due Objects of Charity, they

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overcome their Natural Indisposition, and by the Force of Divine Motives, relieve their Neighbor in his Distress, such Charity of theirs, generally speaking, is more valuable in the Sight of God, than what others do, whose Natural Inclination makes it more easie to them. The Reason is obvious; because the Action is more noble, and the Victory greater, where there is the greater Difficulty, and more stubborn Opposition to be overcome; and since this is clearly on their side, whose Nature renders them averse to all Works of Charity, the greater Crown must be due to them.

Upon this Consideration, the Love of Enemies, and all Charity done to them, has a degree of Eminency above all others; because there is the greater Difficulty in it; whilst Nature being exasperated, and desirous of Revenge, no Charity can be perform'd, but with the greatest of Self-denials, in contradiction to those Inclinations, which are most vigorous in it. But whatever the Difficulty be, this is not sufficient Reason for dispensing with the Duty: For since the Command of God is General, as to the Love of our Neighbor, Man is not to make Exceptions, upon private
Motives

Motives of his own ; since whatever these may be, the Motives, upon which God enjoins a general Charity, are still in force upon every Christian. For if a Person be a known Enemy ; if he has discover'd the Canker of his Heart, both by Malicious Words, and Wicked Contrivances ; if his Malice has been so successful, as to bring Ruin, both to Reputation and Estate ; if he has drawn Misery on himself by his own Folly ; if he be the most Scandalous of Sinners ; yet is he not still the Work of God's Hands, stamp'd with his Image, created by his Power, redeem'd by his Mercy ; is there not still Mercy prepar'd to receive him ? And if he be in Misery, does not Misery exact Compassion ? Does not Want call for Help ? Does not God command it ? Has not the Son of God given an Example of it ; who seeing Mankind miserable thro' Sin, and so far from deserving Help, as to be, on many Titles, unworthy of all Compassion, yet, without regard to his Unworthiness, undertook his Redemption, and purchas'd it with the Price of his Blood ? What then can any Christian pretend, in not returning Good for Evil, or relieving the worst of Enemies ; but only, that the private Consideration of a conceiv'd Hatred or Dislike, will not yield to the Commands

mands of God, nor Temporal Motives give way to those, which are Eternal? And is not this the unhappy State of all Sinners? Their Heart is so disorder'd, as to stifle all the Motions of Grace, and at the same time opens it self to the Impressions of Passion, and lets these carry it away, in Contradiction to the Law and Will of God. If this be forsaking God, and rebelling against him, then certainly such is the Case of all those, who refuse to shew Compassion to their Enemy in his Distress; because, when God requires Mercy, they, upon their own Dislike, shut up their Bowels against Him.

But how can any Object be lov'd, in which there appears nothing but Motives of Dislike, as it must be in an Enemy? I have shewn many other Motives; but Passion is so violent, as to smother them, or so blind, as not to see them. I ask, does not a Mother yet retain a Love for a Son, when by his Provoking, Vicious and Rebellious Ways, he has rais'd in her variety of Passions, and done enough, as it seems, to alienate her Heart from him? She does; because, tho' severely exasperated, yet she has still the Bowels of a Mother, and under all the Deformities of Vice, still discovers in him the Character of a Son. In the same manner, where Grace governs,

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it is not less powerful than Nature ; under the highest Provocations, it retains a Sense of Duty, feels the pressing weight of God's Commands ; and amidst the Arguments of Aversion or Revenge, discerns the Character of a Brother, and of a noble Spirit, created for the Possession of God, and that may yet become the Companion of Angels in that Eternal Inheritance. These Idea's give first a Check to the Suggestion of provok'd Nature, and then both powerfully and sweetly push on the Soul into the Ways of Charity, into those Ways, which Christ has shewn by his Example, of compassionating the Misery it sees, and considering the best Method, by which it can most effectually bring Relief.

Thus many Servants of Christ, and especially the Martyr, whose Memory we celebrate this Day, have follow'd the Steps of their Master, have return'd Good for Evil, have pray'd for their Persecutors ; and under the Execution of their greatest Malice, have ask'd of God the greatest of Blessings for them. They consider'd not themselves as unhappy under what they suffer'd, since they knew such Sufferings to be the Purchase of an Eternal Crown ; but they saw those to be truly miserable, by whose Cruelty they suffer'd ; this Mi-
sery

fery excited their Compassion, and Charity mov'd them to ask for Help, to rescue them from their unhappy State. This was the Spirit of Christ, this was the Spirit of true Charity, and this carried them to the Enjoyment of him, by whose Spirit they liv'd. If we follow them in any degree of Suffering, we cannot expect to partake of their Crown, except we have the like Charity for those, from whom we suffer. This must be the Disposition of our Souls at the Hour of our Death; if we have it not, we cannot hope for the Death of the Just; and how can we expect this Dying, if we practice it not in time of Health. Those, who have been accusom'd to entertain Aversions, to make Return of Evil for Evil, to rejoice in their Misfortunes, whom they dislike, to deny Relief to such, who have injur'd them, have Reason to apprehend, that the same ill Habits will return at the Hour of Death, and even then, when a general Forgiveness is declar'd with their Lips, they will have the Gall of Malice in their Breasts, and not know how to forgive their Enemies from their Hearts, as is requir'd, as an indispensable Condition of Happiness.

O God, if this is to be justly fear'd, help us by thy Grace to lay aside all Bitterness,

ness, Malice, and Desire of Revenge; that so we may prepare our Hearts for that true Charity, which ought to be the Life of our Soul. Teach us to practice what we profess, that we may live so, as we desire to die. May we keep Peace with all, and learn to do Good for Evil; this is the Example St. *Stephen* has given us, and it must be the Practice of this Mercy, by which we are to find Mercy for our selves.

St. *John*.

ON the Day of St. *John*, the Beloved Disciple of Christ, who by Example, by Word and Writing, has so pressingly recommended the Love of our Brethren, and declar'd, that except we have this Charity, we abide in Death, and have no Life in us, we cannot have a more proper Subject, than to consider, what is this Charity, to which we are so strictly oblig'd, and what are the Means for preserving it.

It is certain, the Love, which God exacts from us, in regard of our Brethren or Neighbor, does not consist in any Tenderness of sensible Affection; for this is rather

rather Passion than Charity, and is so far from being the fulfilling of the Law, that either it does open Violence to it, or, when more moderate, is too often prejudicial to the Love we owe to God, and to our Neighbor. The Charity, which God requires, is more substantial, and better founded; founded even on that common Nature, which unites us all in one Body, and on that better Tie, by which we are made Members of the same Mystical Body, of which Christ is the Head. Being thus by Nature, and the Effect of Grace, compacted into one Body, it is a Consequence, drawn by St. Paul, that we ought to have a Concern and Interest in one another; and knowing, that the Good of the whole depends on the Good of every part, we are bound to desire the good of each part, and be solicitous to prevent or remedy the Evil of it; this Desire of doing Good to all, and of giving our Assistance, where it appears necessary, is that Love, which God demands of us; and since it is that, which gives us the nearest Resemblance to God, makes us his Children, and establishes in us, by Virtue of his Promise, a Right to that Eternal Inheritance, which he has prepar'd; hence it is both our greatest Interest and Duty to do all we are

are able, for preserving and strength'ning this Charity in our selves, and to be watchful in cutting off all Occasions, that are likely to destroy or lessen it in our Neighbor.

For preserving and strength'ning this Charity in our selves, there are several Motives and Means, of which the Principal are these: *First*, The Consideration, that whatever Good we do our Neighbor, Christ owns to be done to him: For it is He has said it; *I was Hungry, and you gave me to Eat; I was Thirsty, and you gave me to Drink; I was Naked, and you Cloth'd me;* and after a Catalogue of these Charities, then adds, *Insomuch as you have done it to the least of these my Brethren, you have done it to me.* Mat. 25. 40. Now what greater Encouragement can we have, for expressing our Charity to our Brethren, than this Merciful Goodness of our Redeemer; who being ascended to Heaven, and wanting nothing of what we can do, has substituted the Poor upon Earth, as his Brethren, to be the Object of our Charity, and positively declar'd, that he accepts whatever Service we perform to them, as done to himself? What Comfort ought this to be to such, as assist the Poor, the Prisoners or Sick, and to those, who contribute to this Piety, to be more certain

certain from his own Words, that they serve Jesus Christ, than if they saw him with their Eyes! And since the least of his Servants are here acknowledg'd the proper Object of this Charity, ought not this to lay the Ground for a general Caution, of neglecting none, nor permitting natural Inclination to put a Bias upon our Charity; but to assist those, whom Providence presents to us, or whose Necessity demands a Preference?

This Motive is back'd by the Consideration of the great Interest we have in it: For since Christ's Acceptance of the Charity we do to others, is for no Advantage of his own, but for the acknowledging himself engag'd to return a Reward; we may in this discover, that in whatever Good we do to others, we do a much greater Good to our selves, and by the inconsiderable Helps we give our Neighbors, prepare for our selves the Recompence of Eternal Glory. And this is not the happy Fruit of that Charity only, which is relieving the Poor and Distress'd, but likewise of all other Branches of it; as in patiently bearing with the Troublesom, putting up Affronts, forgiving Injuries, suing for Peace, &c. There being not any thing of this done, upon the Motive of Charity, and for God's sake, but

but God has engag'd abundantly to recompence it, and promis'd Infinite Mercy, in Reward of this Mercy to a Brother.

A Means for obtaining this Charity towards our Neighbor, is by entertaining an Humble Opinion of our selves; for whoever is possess'd with a true Sense of his Unworthiness and Sin, will be ready to catch at any Opportunity of doing Good to others, for making his own Peace with God; and seeing his own Deformity, occasion'd by Sin, he will more easily be inclin'd to judge Reproaches and Contempts as his Due, and be more ready to pardon them. Where Pride and an Imperious Humor excluding this Humility, makes a Christian swell with the Opinion of his own Great self, he has more Contempt for others, than Compassion; has scarce a Sense of any Evils, but what he feels himself, and therefore is not much inclin'd to give Help to others in Distress: From the same Root, all imagin'd Affronts are follow'd with Resentments, and nothing is so natural, as to think of Revenge; hence Pride becomes a Barr against the Two principal Effects of Charity, which are Giving and Forgiving, and shews what gives the greatest Advantage to both.

Another

Another Means, is by fortifying the Soul with Patience; for if it be not thus prepar'd, how shall it comply with those things, which are necessary for keeping Peace? Not to be provok'd, not to swear or curse, to turn the Cheek to a second Blow, to forgive a Brother Seventy-times Seven, to love Enemies, to pray for Persecutors; how can this be done, where Patience is not? It is Impatience is in the Breach of all Charity, and the same join'd with Pride, opposes all Overtures of Peace; and therefore where there is not Patience, there cannot be much Charity.

Hence the more entire Means for the Practice of Charity, in keeping Peace, is made up of Humility and Patience, which join'd together, will carry the Christian on thro' those several degrees shewn by Christ, in his Sermon on the Mount. The first is, Not to offer an Injury to another. The second, When an Injury is offer'd, not to return like for like, but to be silent. The third, To be easie in receiving it. The fourth, To be prepar'd for greater Injuries. The fifth, Not to hate the Person, who has offer'd the Injury. The sixth, To love him. The seventh, To be willing to do him Good. The eighth, To pray for him. By these Steps is the Christian to ascend
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in the Practice of Charity; great Humility and Patience are necessary for this; and except he labors daily, as Occasions offer, to improve in these, he must unavoidably fall short of that Charity, without which, all things besides can profit nothing.

Now, tho' the same Means, which nourish Charity in the Christian's own Breast, are likewise proper to maintain it in his Neighbor; yet I cannot but give some Hints of the Particulars necessary to be observ'd in regard of him: As, *first*, in Conversation, to be very Cautious, not to relate to any Person, what another has said of him; because this is the Seed of Discord, and nothing lays a more certain Ground for Dissention than this; and therefore it is declar'd in Scripture, as one of the things, which God hates. Neither ought this to be observ'd in great things only, but likewise in such, as seem but inconsiderable; because such, as seem so to the Relater, are often accompanied with Circumstances unknown to him, which occasion deep Resentments in the Hearer, and dispose him to the open Breach of Charity. And if it ever comes to the Ear of the Party concern'd, as it too often does, it cannot fail of making ill Impressions of him, who has been the

Officious

Officious-Whisperer, in reviving that, which otherwise might have laid dead, and could have done no Mischief. Let but every one reflect upon the Pernicious Consequences, within their own Knowledge, of this hateful Gossiping, in the Division made between Friends, Relations and Families, or in keeping up what has been otherwise made, and they will soon see, how necessary this Caution is for the Support of Charity.

2dly. To avoid all Biting Reflections of Persons present, such as expose them to the Company, and render them ridiculous for some natural Defect or Indiscretion. For generally this has something of undervaluing in it, and cannot but give Offence to those concern'd, however for the time they may dissemble their Resentments. This is more to be censur'd, when a Person ridicules his Neighbor, to shew himself a Wit; because the Jest makes the Reflection more remarkable to the Hearers, and it betrays in the Speaker an ungovernable Vanity, who throws Dirt at his Neighbor, that he may look the fairer, and sets his Foot upon him, to make himself the more remarkable.

3dly. Not to be very Positive or Earnest, in defending one's Opinion in Indifferent

ferent Matters, or in making Good what one has occasionally said on any common Subject. Because excessive Positiveness tempts others to Opposition, who otherwise are not inclin'd to it; and if there happens to be any others present, who are subject to the like Weakness, there cannot fail of a Dispute; such Dispute naturally falls into Contention; this is follow'd with Heats and hard Words, and hence is laid the Ground for Animosity, and future Misunderstanding, such as is not easily compos'd again. Those, who are of a very Positive Temper, have Reason to observe this Rule, for their own Interior Peace, and that they may not be avoided as intolerable in Conversation, and all others will find Occasions of its being serviceable to them.

4thly. To avoid other Occasions of Wrangling and Contention. Some Persons are very forward, in giving such Occasions by their Froward, Captious or Passionate Temper; so that if there be not a great degree of Patience and Discretion in others, that live with them, there can be no Possibility of keeping Peace; but all will be fill'd with Noise and Prophaneness, such as destroys Charity, both with God and Man.

5thly. Not to yield to the Suggestions of an Exceptionous Temper, which is ever inclin'd to put the worst Construction on every thing that is said or done, especially by such Persons, to whom there is any Disaffection or Dislike, and too often by Friends.

6thly. To conceal whatever Resentments they conceive, upon what is said with any seeming Reflection upon them, and to endeavor to put it by with a Jest; for to be too starch'd in this Case, so as to take no Picks, that are usual in Conversation amongst Friends, is the way to make a Breach, where none was intended.

7thly. To be Moderate, Sweet and Mild, in giving just Reproofs, because this will shew, they are the Effect of Charity, and not of Passion: And with the same Spirit of Humility and Meekness to receive whatever Reproofs are given by others, whether Friends or Enemies; because this is due, where the Reproof is Just, and where it is not, an Humble Sweetness will moderate, and even confound the Passion of the Assault, and open the Way for coming to a better Understanding.

Lastly, Not to be easie in Hearing, nor credulous in Believing reflecting Reports; but to suppose Aggravations or Mistakes

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in the Relation, and to be ever willing to interpret every thing in the most favorable Sense; and where the Matter will not bear it, to believe it, at least, the effect of some Passion, Rashness or Indiscretion, with the Hopes, that the Party has repented of, whatever he said or did of this Nature. To this I must add the Caution, of not taking notice of, but passing by whatever Peevish Expressions come in Letters; for that too punctual Answers in this kind often breed Differences, and Silence prevents them, when some ill Humor only has given the Occasion to them. A second Caution must here have place, of not being too Nice in the Point of Titles, Ceremonies or Place, or in considering the Return of Visits, or of Answers to Letters; for that a Stiffness in these Formalities makes Exceptions upon the least Failings, these are follow'd with Resentments, and these perswade to the Interruption of a good Correspondence. For the last Caution, I think it a necessary part of Prudence, upon any Difference, to forbear all manner of complaining or reflecting Expressions; because these reported again, certainly widen the Breach, and often raise Animosities to such a height, that they are not to be compos'd again. The more charitable way is to be wholly

silent; or if there be reason for speaking, to speak to none, but to the Party principally concern'd; and if this be done with a peaceable Enquiry, instead of positive charging, it must make way for Peace, if it does not meet with stubborn Pride, or obstinate Folly to prevent it.

These are some Principal Means for preserving Charity, both in our selves, and our Neighbor; there are many others, especially such, as are to be taken from the Observation of the particular Ways of the Persons, with whom we live or converse. And since Charity towards our Neighbor is so necessary to Salvation, they ought to be a part of every one's Care, both to observe them, and let them be as a Rule in their Conversation. Do thou, O God, I beseech thee, help all thy Servants, and preserve them in the Ways of Peace; help them to suppress all that Pride, Stubbornness, Malice, and Self-love, which promote all Divisions, and give them that Spirit of true Humility and Patience, which will carry them thro' all kinds of Provocations, and teach them to keep Peace, when War is proclaim'd.

Holy

Holy Innocents.

ON this Day of Innocents Suffering, and being Consecrated Victims to Heaven by their Blood, we have a great Encouragement, from their Triumphs, to suffer with Patience all the Attempts of Malice and Injustice, and even then to rejoice, when the World is pursuing us as Malefactors, or pitying us as Unfortunate. This ought to be the Subject of this Days Discourse, and I will not disappoint those, who expect it; but being likely to meet frequent Occasions of speaking upon this Point, and knowing, that this Festival, call'd *Childermas-Day*, is marked by many with black Letters in the Calendar, as *Unlucky*, and gives Rise to a Course of Superstitious, Weekly Observations, throughout the following Year, I shall confine my self to this Subject, and with a Censure of all Superstitions, shew, how Reasonable and Christian it is, to suffer patiently the Continuance of any Evil, rather than seek Relief by such Remedies, as can be justly suspected of Superstition; and this almost entirely from the Writings of the Primitive Fathers, so to set their Authority

against a vain Practice, borrow'd from the Heathens, but kept up by too many Christians.

And first I set down a general Catalogue of the Superstitious Practices mention'd by the Fathers: As *first*, The Observation of Days, of some being Lucky, and some Unlucky, and foreboding ill Success to whatever is begun or undertaken on them. *2dly*, The Observation of Omens, as of Birds flying, or Beasts crossing the Way, or of any Noise made by them. *3dly*, The observing of Dreams, and of Sneezing. *4thly*, The Attempt of easing Pain, or curing Diseases by Characters, Writings, tho' of Prayers, &c. by Ligatures or Fillets, or wearing such things, as have no natural Virtue, in order to the Effect propos'd, but are ever accompanied with some Sign or Ceremony, or by often touching dead Bodies. *5thly*, The Enquiry after future Events, by consulting Astrologers, Fortune-tellers, or making Discoveries by such as are call'd Cunning Men. To these may be added, the modern Practice of foreknowing what is to come, by saying particular Prayers, by Fasting and Watching some particular Nights, or by a Ceremony, in turning the Bible, &c. Besides these, there are many others, particular to particular Countries

tries and People, but especially in curing Distempers and Wounds, and some of them have reach'd to the very Altar, disguising their Superstition, with the Sacrilegious Abuse of the most Holy Things; but all may be reduced to some of the foregoing Heads, expressly mention'd by the Fathers: And therefore, without adding more, I now proceed to the second Point, of seeing what was the Sentiment of the Fathers, in regard of these Superstitions, and what their Censure those Christians, who observ'd or practis'd them.

St. Basil, in his Comments on the second Chapter of *Isaiah*: Dost thou see, says he, the great Mischiefs of Ominous Observations? He that applies himself to these, has no Part in the Providence of God. And yet many Christians think it a Matter of no Scruple, to give Ear to such Comments, and by them to raise their Reputation; neither are they asham'd to regard this Ominous Superstition and Signs.—They are assur'd, that the People was rejected by God, who follow'd this vain Curiosity. For in the Law of Moses, Southsaying, Foretelling Events, Observation of Birds and Omens was mark'd with Infamy, as the Invention of Devils. And 'tis unworthy of the Christian Morals, that he, who has it in his Power to consult

with the Law of God, should, in deliberating upon what he is to do, take Brute Beasts for his Council, and make use of these, as Doctors and Lawgivers. The Birds are ignorant of the Danger before them, and how shall they foretel thee, what is to come?

St. Gregory Nazianzen, Orat. 40. in S. Baptisma. Thou hast no need of Charms, by which that wicked Custom has gain'd upon unsteddy Minds, of robbing God of the Honor due to him, and taking it to themselves.

St. John Chrysostom upon Psalm 9. This is my Crown, O God, this my Glory, to overcome thro' thee, and by thee to obtain Salvation. This I say, for their sakes, who, when afflicted with Distempers, use Charms, and seek out for other Impostures and Witchcrafts, to recover their Health; for this is not to recover, but to perish. For the greatest Health is to receive it from God. And in his 12. Hom. ad pop. Antioch. The Poms of Satan are the Theatres, the Circensiam Games, the Observation of Days, of all Foreboding and Ominous Things.

S. Augustin, L. de rect. Cath. Conv. Before all things I declare and conjure you, that none of you observe the Sacrilegious Customs of the Pagans, nor presume to consult or ask Questions of Enchanters, Diviners, or Cunning Men, for any Cause, or upon the Account of
any

any Infirmitie. He that commits this Evil, makes void his Baptism. Observe no sort of Forebodings, nor Sneezing; and, upon a Journey, have no regard to the Singing of Birds: Let none take notice, upon what Day he goes out, or on what he returns, because God made them all. Then having made a List of infinit other Superstitions, as in Ligatures of certain Trees, Fillers, &c. he condemns them all. Which he does again, Serm. 241. de temp. where, after a like Catalogue, he adds, *Whoever commits this Evil, makes void his Baptism, and presently becomes a Pagan, and Sacrilegious; and if he seeks not Remedy by large Alms, by severe and long Fasting, he will perish for ever.* And Serm. 215. de temp. having mention'd several Superstitious Practices of Fillers, Characters, Herbs, and the Juice of things hung up, &c. he thus concludes, *If they do not desist from this Sacrilege, where the Devil is to burn, there shall they be condemn'd.* And for preventing Snares, he declares in his Seventh Tract upon St. John's Gospel, that the Sacred Name of Christ is often made use of in the Charms of Ligatures, &c. that so Christians may more easily be deceiv'd, and be prevail'd on by the Disguise of a little Honey, to drink Poyson. In his Second Book, de Doctr. Chr. c. 20. he de-

clares it his Opinion, that in all Superstitious Charms, there is either an exprefs or tacit Compact with the Devil; and therefore in another Book, *De Vera Relig.* he gives this Advice. *Let not it be our Religion to worship the Devil, because all kinds of Superstition, being a great Punishment of Man, and a most dangerous Baseness, is the Honor and Triumph of the Devil.* S. Cyprian likewise says, *L. de ido. van.* That the Devil is the Author and Promoter of all Superstitious Observations, and by these contrives to draw Christians from their Dependance on God, and to be Companions in his Punishment. And S. Basil, in c. 8. *Isa.* That he, who follows such vain Observations, forsakes God, and gives himself to the Treacherous Devils: *Deo relicto, perfidis dæmonibus & infidiosis ultro seipsum devover.*

Having seen the Sentiments of the Fathers on this Subject, let us now see, what Advice they give, and we shall hear this one Voice from them all; Christian, chuse to suffer the Extremity of Evils rather than seek Relief by Superstitious and Charms. Hear this from S. Chrysostom, *Orat. 5. adv. Judæos.* If being visited with a light Distemper, thou presently forsakest God, and seekest Help from Devils, how wilt thou obtain Pardon? By what Means wilt thou be able to render God propitious to thee? There is none, who can obtain
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this for thee, tho' he be as Powerful with God, as Moses was. There is none, I say, who can do this for thee.——So great are these Sins, that they exceed all Pardon, and are without Excuse. Let us not therefore provoke so great Wrath against us, altho' there are some, who seem to remove a Feaver by their Charms; for they do not in reality remove it, but bring another Feaver upon the Conscience; Reason and Conscience daily reproaching, and saying, Thou hast done wickedly, thou hast wrought Iniquity, thou hast broke the Covenant made with God; for a little Health thou hast forsaken the Way of Piety. Art thou the only Person that has suffer'd this? Have not others been afflicted with sharper Distempers? And yet none of them have attempted any such thing, whilst thou, Sift and Dissolute, hast pawn'd thy Soul. If thou hadst held out awhile, and with Scorn cast those forth of thy House, who offer'd thee Remedy by their Applications and Charms, thou wouldst forthwith have receiv'd Relief from thy own Conscience: For tho' the Feaver should return a Thousand times, yet thy Soul would be more comfortably refresh'd, than with all their Prescriptions. Thy Conscience approving, and saying, Well done, Servant of Christ, who wouldst rather die under thy Disease, than forsake thy Duty; in the last Day, thou wilt stand next to the Martyrs. For, as the Martyrs
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chose Scourges and Torments, that they might gain the Crown; so thou hast made it thy choice, to be scourg'd and tormented with a Fever, rather than depart from the Ways of Piety.

This is the Sense of all the Fathers; which being too long to insert here, I only now desire the present Age to consider their own Presumption; who being so nice, on one side, as not to have Patience in moderate Trials, are yet so bold, on the other, as to venture upon such things, which they see by such Authority condemn'd, as the Invention of Devils. These Fathers liv'd amongst the Heathens, and knew all their Practices, and therefore we cannot desire better Witnesses in this Affair, than they were; and since they come generally to the very Particulars, which are now observ'd by many, those Christians must either despise the Fathers, or their own Salvation, who dare venture on in those Ways, which these say, lead to Hell. Where natural Qualities are acknowledg'd, there needs be no Scruple; but where some extraordinary Effect is expected, to which the natural Qualities of the things prescrib'd have no Proportion, or when certain Words, Forms, Ceremonies, Numbers or Days, are to be observ'd, which can have no Effect

Effect according to Nature, tho' they are within the Bounds of *Sacred*, all such Prescriptions are to be suspected, and the Christian is oblig'd rather to suffer with Patience, what Providence permits for his Trial, than seek Remedy by such unwarrantable Ways. 'Tis his Duty to seek Relief, but this ought to be in the Method, which God has approv'd; natural Causes have their Virtue from the Author of Nature, and therefore are Lawful; but where an Effect is expected above Nature, here there must be a Restraint, and in this nothing must be done, but as far as God and his Church have approv'd; and to go farther, is to expect Help from the Devil and his Ministers, who often make use both of Nature and Religion, to disguise their Charms, and gain Credit to their Impostures.

Wherefore, I beseech thee, O God, not to permit those, who profess thy Name, to be thus deluded. Turn the Hearts of all from barefaced Impiety; and as for all those, who have a horror of this, confirm them by thy Grace against all Deceit, that they may not seek Help from the Devil, while their Hope is in thee. Give them Patience to suffer whatever Trials, thou art pleas'd to send, and let it be their Glory still to suffer, rather than

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than make Trials of what has no Warrant from thee. Suppress likewise all vain Curiosity, that none may seek the Knowledge of those things, which thou art pleas'd to hide from us; and let an entire Confidence in the Orders and Conduct of thy Providence, banish all vain Solicitude of Foreseeing, which is thy Attribute, and belongs not to us. It is enough for us, that we are under thy Care, and may we never withdraw our selves from this, by studying to be too wise.

St. Thomas of Canterbury.

ON the Day of this Holy Prelate, who so far asserted the Rights of the Church, as to oppose the Designs of his Prince, and rather to bear the Effects of his Displeasure in Persecution and Banishment, than to comply in what he thought Unjust; on this Day, I say, we cannot have a more proper Subject, than to consider, What is the Courage, that is the Christian's Duty; how far is he oblig'd to resist, and when to yield.

First then, it is certain, there is an Obedience due to our Lawful Sovereign, to Magistrates and Parents; for God has com-

St. Thomas of Canterbury. III

commanded it, *Rom. 13. 1. Let every Soul be subject to the higher Powers. Whoever resisteth the Powers, resisteth the Ordinance of God.* And this Precept being given at a time, when the higher Powers were Heathens and cruel Persecutors of Christianity, it is plain, that no Pretext of Sin or Infidelity in our Rulers, can be sufficient for us to dispence with this Duty. Hence for a Christian to oppose the Lawful Commands of his Prince, is not to be call'd Courage, but Disobedience and Rebellion: I say, Lawful Commands; for if he requires what is evidently contrary to the Law of God, in this Case, a Compliance is not due; because Magistrates being God's Vicegerents, and the Ministers of his Power, there cannot be Obedience due to them, when they proceed contrary to him, by whose Commission they have Power to act: This can be no more reasonably expected by Princes, than that their own Ministers should be obey'd, in Contradiction to what they themselves have commanded. In such Case therefore the Christian is to answer with St. Peter, *We must obey God rather than Man.* And if the Prince's Displeasure be thus provok'd against him, he must either peaceably withdraw, as this Prelate did, or patiently suffer whatever shall be
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inflicted on him, as the Penalty of his refusing to comply.

To suffer this patiently is one part of Christian Courage, even that Courage, which Christ, his Apostles, and all the Martyrs, have taught us, who rather than comply with what was unlawful, or forsake their Duty to God, submitted to the Rigor of Humane Laws, and to all the Cruelty of Barbarous Persecutors. And it was nothing but Fear, Cowardice, and the effect of a mean Spirit in others, who, to be exempt from such Persecution, wrong'd their own Conscience, and forsook the Commands of God, to comply with the Laws of Men. This is a Baseness unworthy of the Christian Spirit, which prescribing a strict Obedience to the Lawful Commands of those in Power, as to God himself, whose Ministers they are, marks with Infamy all Compliance with what is sinful, and declares it a Disobedience to God, such as provokes his Anger, arms his Almighty Hand against it, and is to feel the Eternal Weight of it in Punishment of the Treachery. This therefore the Christian is to abhor, and rather embrace the Loss of all that is Temporal, encourag'd with the Promise of that Crown, which is to be the Reward of his Sufferings. And tho' he had
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the fairest Prospect of a Deliverance, by any treacherous Designs, or by open Violence against those Rulers, who thus abuse their Power, and threaten the Extremity of Miseries or Death to him; yet he is to make use of no such Expedient, but peaceably suffer whatever is threatned, because it cannot be lawful to lift up a Hand against the Lord's Anointed; and the Christian's Victory, in such Cases, is to be obtain'd by an Humble Patience, and not by Resistance, or the Sword.

But that the Christian may have his Sufferings crown'd, he is to be very well assur'd, that what is requir'd of him, is contrary to the Law of God, and that he cannot comply, without offending him; for to stand out in any other Case, is generally nothing but Stubbornness; the Pretext of Conscience is made the Cover to it, and whatever he suffers must be set down as the Punishment of his own Indiscretion. For tho' God has promis'd an Eternal Recompence to those, who suffer for Justice or Righteousness sake, yet he has no where promis'd it to such as suffer thro' their own Folly, Humor or Passion. Wherefore the Christian is certainly to be condemn'd of Rashness, who disturbs the Public Peace, interrupts the Order of Government, and brings
Ruin

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Ruin on himself or Family, by refusing Obedience to the Commands of his Prince, if he has not by a most serious Deliberation, free from Interest or Passion, discover'd them to be absolutely dishonorable to God, or involving a Contempt of his Will. Upon which Consideration I must acknowledge, that were my Religion nothing but Opinion, or the Result of my own Private Thoughts, or of others, as much subject to Mistake, as my self, I should rather comply with the Commands of my Prince, as to Religion, than break the Publick Peace, and my own, in Defence of my own Perswasion. My Motive is this, because the Command of Obedience to Higher Powers is own'd as a Principle reveal'd by God, as is likewise the Command of keeping Peace; and if my Religion be no more than a Perswasion built upon my own Opinion, or that of others, like my self, this can be no more than *Probable*. Now tho' I cannot but own so much of Self-love, as to be inclin'd to give my own Opinion the Preference to others; yet to break the common Peace for my Opinion, to fight for my Opinion, to suffer for my Opinion, I cannot think reasonable, because the Revelation I have of Obedience, and keeping Peace, ought to take place of what is no more than Opinion.

And

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And tho' Conscience may claim a Submission, which cannot be wrong'd without Sin; yet I am not to be frighted with the Name; for if Conscience be founded on no more than Opinion, contrary to what is expressly reveal'd, it is no more than a Rash Opinion under another Name, and therefore is Unjust, in claiming so Rigorous a Submission, and they, who give it, are no better than frighted Fools; and if I make a Conscience of my own Opinion, and make none of what God has expressly commanded, it must be Blindness, that sets up Opinion against God; and if I suffer for such a Conscience, I am a Martyr of Stubbornness and Self-love, and not of God. Suffering therefore on this Account is not to be esteem'd Christian Courage; because it cannot be Christian, where it is not in the Cause of Justice and Truth. How great then is the Mistake of a considerable part of the Christian World, who suffer for Conscience, and make this Conscience of their own Opinion, contrary to the express Word of God? And how perversly Blind is their Zeal, who have disturb'd Governments, and broken the Peace of the Church, upon Pretext of Conscience; when this Conscience

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science duly examin'd, at the best, is no more than their own Opinion; and the Peace they ought to have kept, and not broken, has been the express Command of God?

Another Occasion for shewing of Courage, is in withstanding the Temptations of Sin; there is great Variety in this kind, and no Victory can be expected, where there is not Courage to fight, and to fight even to the end. But that which I apprehend most general, is the Temptation of complying with the World in what is extravagant, evidently Dangerous or Sinful. We have many other Enemies besides, but they all are Confederates with this one, whilst the Devil and our own natural Corruption join with the World, and powerfully abett its Cause; whence it must be concluded, that the Christian, who has not Courage to stand against the World, yields, and is a Slave to all.

One great Temptation of the World is that of complying with Company in excessive Drinking and Gaming. In which I must reckon those, who are already engag'd, and provoke others to join with them, as the Children of the World, who espouse its Rebellion against

gainst God, set up a Standard to establish and enlarge its Usurp'd Empire, and both by Violence and Snares endeavor to bring others into the same vile Subjection with themselves. These under this Character, openly promoting what is sinful, are Rebels against God ; professing Christianity, and undermining it, are Traitors ; crucifying again our Lord in their repeated Crimes, are *Jews* ; acting against the known Principles of the Gospel, are Infidels ; and all the Courage they shew in the Contempt of the Divine Law, and the Promises of Faith, is nothing but the Courage of Heathens. This is the true State of their Case, and I think it so unhappy, that I cannot but judge them more miserable than the worst of *Mahometans*, the blindest of Idolaters, and the most unnatural *Canibals*. And yet, O God, how many are there of those, who profess thy Name, who own Thee their Lord, who ask Blessings of Thee, and even come to Thy Table, who are engag'd in this unhappy Cause, are Leaders in it, and yet sit contented under a false Peace of Conscience, as if their Case were tolerable, at least, and not desperate !

And

And would not one think now, there were no need of much Courage to stand against the Perswasions of these, who are Men of no Christian Reputation, and invire to a Cause so Infamous? What then must their Cowardice be, who being sensible, how great an evil Intemperance is, how many and pernicious are the Consequences of it, nay, and many times, have an Aversion to it, and yet are over-rul'd, against all the Light of Conscience, by the only Apprehension of some light Reproaches, which ought to be the Christian's Glory, and no part of his Fear, or his Shame? This is such a Weakness, which he cannot seriously reflect upon without Confusion, to think, that he, who by his Profession is bound with Resolution to support the sharpest Trials, should be laugh'd out of all Morality, and tamely lay down his Cause, for fear of being pointed at by those, whose Brutal Practices should make him dread their Applauses more than their Censures. Let this but be consider'd, and it will soon appear, that he is unworthy of the Christian Name, who has not Courage, either to stand his Ground, and boldly maintain the Cause of Temperance amidst such weak Provocations,

ons, or at least to retire, pitying their vile Attempts, and despising their Threats. For where is Christianity, in being sober out of the Occasions of Excess, and yet not to have that Deference for God and his Commands, and that Love for Temperance, as to reject them, when they are offer'd? 'Tis plain, here is neither the Obedience of a Son, nor the Fidelity of a Servant; and what then is the Christian, who is neither the Child nor Servant of God, but for Humane Respects, and a shameful Compliance, renounces in Fact both these Characters?

I know, good Breeding, Civility and Honor, here put in their Plea, which will not allow of Rudeness, and therefore perswade to a Compliance, rather than incurr the Censure of Moroseness, and ill Education. But what have these to do here, where the Matter is evidently Sinful? There can be no Honor, in doing what is Dishonorable to God, any more, than it can be Honorable in a Court, to do what is an Affront to the Prince. And if it be good Breeding, to commit an Excess, or be Drunk for Company; may not a Man be excus'd in Idolatry or Murther, rather than be so Rude, as not to comply with the

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the Demands of Friends? These Arguments might be tolerated from Persons, who had already drown'd their Reason, but not from those, who are yet in their Senses. For 'tis plain, if Company are so mad, as to promote what is unreasonable, if they agree to run into the Fire, or leap into the Sea, Civility and Honor ought to dissuade from such a Rashness, but can oblige none to join in it. If therefore a Corrupt World has taken off the Scandal from Vice, and encourag'd a Compliance under the Title of Honor, the Christian must know, he is as much oblig'd to renounce such Honor, as the Vice; and if they call this Rudeness, let them call it so; for it must be his Honor to be Rude; and if they reproach him with it, let him tell them, that the Rudeness, which they have made necessary for the Preservation of Reason and Virtue, is much more Honorable, than the Honor, as they call it, of becoming a Beast. They that have not Reason enough to judge so, and Courage to do so, let them renounce what they profess, for they have not the Soul of a Christian. Wherefore, I beseech thee, O God, to inspire the Hearts of thy Faithful, with
such

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such true Courage, that neither Fear of Persecution, nor Reproach of Friends, may ever so prevail upon them, as to make them false to thee. Let the Love of thee, and the Sense of their Duty, keep their Minds so steddy, that in the midst of all Temptations, they may remember, that there can be nothing esteem'd lost, when Heaven is gain'd, and that the only Honor becoming a Christian is generously to despise all, to be Faithful to God.

Sunday *within the* Octave of
Christmas.

AT this time, when we celebrate the Memory of the greatest of the Divine Blessings, in the Birth of the Son of God, made Man for our Redemption, it cannot be an unseasonable Consideration to reflect, in what manner, we may worthily observe this Festival, what are the Exercises proper, and which are those, that ought to be banish'd from it.

As to the former part, I have already given some Directions, in speaking upon another Occasion of this Solemnity; and therefore it will be enough here to

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touch

touch at them in short. *First* then, it is the Christian's part to present himself in Spirit at the Manger of *Bethlehem*, and there, in the Act of a most lively Faith, to profess the Belief of this Mystery, of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, being made Man for our Salvation. *2dly*, He ought to bow down, and with the Profoundest Act of Adoration, confess him to be his God. *3dly*, Give him Thanks for this his Infinite Mercy and Goodness, in undertaking the Work of his Redemption. *4thly*, Offer himself, with all possible Sincerity, to be his Disciple and Servant. *5thly*, Pray for Grace to renounce the old Man with his Acts, and to put on the New. *6thly*, Ask Pardon for all Sins past, that he be not excluded, thro' his Unworthiness, from this Grace.

These are the Devotions most suitable to the Mystery of this Holy Time; but they are to be accompanied with Endeavors answerable to them, that his Life may be Christian, as well as his Profession; and this cannot be, but by making the Life of Christ the Model of his. Christ being God, comes to him Humbled, even in the form of a Servant; the more Occasions the Christian finds of humbling himself, the more will he be like

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like his Master. Christ comes to give himself a Sacrifice for his Friends, and for his Enemies; if the Christian at this time exercises his Patience, in peaceably submitting to such Trials as God sends him, and his Charity; in liberally giving to the Poor, and generously forgiving Injuries and Enemies, the nearer he will come to the Pattern before him. Christ comes to teach him the Contempt of the World, in chusing those things, which are reputed Abject and Mean, and renouncing those, which are commonly esteem'd Great and Glorious; the more a Christian can prevail with himself to follow Christ in the same Choice, of despising what he despis'd, and giving the Preference to what Christ embrac'd, the better Right he will have to the Character of a true Disciple. Christ comes to do the Will of his Heavenly Father, even to the Death of the Cross; the more the Christian denies his own Will, in renouncing the Ways of the Flesh, the Devil, and the World, for to do the Will of God, and observe his Commands, the greater Resemblance he will have with him, whom he here acknowledges to be his Lord. In this all Christians may see, how they may keep a Feast acceptable to our Lord, in the Practice of Humility,

of Patience, of Charity, of Contempt of the World, of Self-denial, and of Obedience to the Will of God. These are the Ways which Christ has chosen; the Ways, by which he has undertaken to work out our Salvation, and there are no other Ways, but these, we have learnt from him, by which we can celebrate, either to God's Honor, or our own Good, the Joys of our Redeemer.

By what is prescrib'd for the worthy Observation of this Festival, may be easily discover'd, what is to be avoided in it; to wit, all, that is contrary or disagreeable to the Ways of Christ; because it must be obvious to every degree of Reason, that it cannot be Honor, but an Affront to Christ, to pretend to commemorate his Mercies in such a Method, to which he has declar'd his Dislike, if not his Abhorrence. Hence must be condemn'd, most especially at this time, all Gluttony and Drunkenness, Pride, Excessive Gaming, dangerous Entertainments and Diversions, such as overthrow Discipline, and open the Heart to the Devil. I do not intend by this to banish all Mirth or Recreation at this time from Christian Families, or to declaim against Friendly Entertainments, such as are the Arguments of Charity, and Helps to a Neigh-

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Neighborly Correspondence; all this I commend and encourage, but I plead for the cutting off all that in them, which is directly sinful, or so very dangerous, that to venture in them, is not agreeable to that Caution and Reserve, which belongs to the Christian Character. And I hope in this, there is nothing can be censur'd of Moroseness or Bigotry, any more, than there could be, in advising the Hunter, not to venture into such places, where there is Danger of Drowning, or breaking his Neck; since the Offence of God is no more agreeable to Christian Mirth, than such Folly and Rashness in Sports-men.

Hence no Entertainments can be allow'd at this time, which are not season'd with Moderation and Temperance. Because Gluttony and Drunkenness being at all times Sins, which, as *St. Paul* has positively declar'd, exclude the Christian from the Kingdom of Heaven, they have a particular Aggravation in them in this Festival, while we celebrate the Mercy of our Redeemer, who comes to offer himself a Sacrifice for Sin, and by his painful Sufferings shews us, that it ought to be the Subject of our Horror, and not of our Mirth. Shew me therefore the Christian, that indulges himself at this

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time in Excess, and takes greater Liberty in offending, and you will shew me one, who renounces all part in Christ, and in the Redemption wrought by him.

2dly, No Recreations or Divertisements can be allow'd, which are not moderated by Christian Discretion, and so regulated by Order and Measure, as to exclude every thing, that is a Breach of Duty or Discipline. Hence, tho' Games of Cards and Dice may be permitted under this Regulation, yet they are unlawful, if they have no such Restraint. So that, if the Company be subject to Prophaneness or Quarrels in their Games: If there be Excess in the Money that is ventur'd, or in the Time spent in them, such Gaming cannot be permitted as a suitable Mirth, because they are made the Occasions of Sin; whilst the Christian either directly offends by Irreligion, or by Loss of Time or Money disables himself, as to the performing such Charities and Devotions, which the Excess of God's Mercy exacts from him at this time.

The same Judgment is to be made of Dancing: For tho' this may be an allowable Recreation, when 'tis in such Company, as are above Suspicion of Lightness or Excess; yet when it comes to be in Mixt Company, or in Public, where the
first

first Strife is, Who shall bring most Vanity with them; where Innocence and Virtue cannot be secure from the sly Attempts of those, who know how to communicate their Poyson by a passing Glance, and almost undiscernable Whisper; where the Soul is softn'd by unavoidable Circumstances, and fitted to receive the Impressions of Folly: Where the Weakness of Persons being discover'd, they are markt out for Destruction, and cannot fail of being brought into the Danger of many Snares. Where Dancing is attended with these, and infinit other ill Circumstances, well known to those, who are frequent at this Pastime, I think it cannot be ask'd, Whether this ought to be the Diversion of this time; except it can be made a Doubt, Whether a Pest-house or Hospital, where is all that is Infectious, be a proper Place for an Entertainment of Music or Dancing. For if this be so easily resolv'd, that it is Madness to seek Diversion there, where is so much danger of Health; it must be resolv'd, that it can be no less than Madness, for a Christian, when he is most oblig'd to Holiness, to seek Diversion there, where is so much Danger of Sin.

These Resolutions, whilst they allow of Mirth, and except only against Sin, or what nearly leads to it, cannot be esteem'd severe; and so those will judge, who can but take the Pains to examine, with what Rigor the Fathers. Canons, Decrees, and Laws of the Church pronounce against Dice and Dancing; for whilst these are condemn'd, as the Inventions of Satan, the Suggestions of Corruption, the Food of Vice, the Shame of Christians, &c. what has been here said, must be esteem'd favorable. And it must be their Care, who make use of this Indulgence, to see, they do not insensibly run into those Abuses, which have been the just Occasion of those severe Censures, formerly pass'd against them. It being most certain, that where-ever these creep in, all such Gaming and Entertainments are at this time to be esteem'd as unlawful, as they were judg'd heretofore, and no Body can excuse those, who follow them, from the same Condemnation; since the Guilt of Sin is no more to be tolerated now, than it was heretofore, and the Obligation for Christians avoiding what immediately disposes to Sin, is always the same.

By

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By these Rules may Christians know, how they are to observe this Festival, both in the Practice of what is most commendable, and in declining such Dangers, which ill Custom has laid too much in their Way. It is the Effect of God's Goodness, yearly to renew in us the Mysteries of our Salvation, and by their Memory to excite in us Desires of accomplishing that happy Work. And 'tis the Effect of the Devil's Malice to mix our most Holy Solemnities with Corruption and Abuses, that by them he may render useless to Men all the Mercies of God, and even then more closely engage them to Earth, when with the strongest Motives they are invited to Heaven. It is only thy Grace, O God, which can give Christians a true Sense to distinguish thy Mercies from these unhappy Snares; Grant them now, I beseech thee, this Light, that they may not confound the Works of thy Goodness with Hellish Abuses, and that Satanick Assemblies be no where encourag'd, when all should be one Congregation of Saints.

St. Silvester.

THIS being the Day of a Holy Bishop of *Rome*, in whose time, by the Favor of *Constantine*, Peace was restored to the Church, after the Persecution of Three Hundred Years; and this Prelate taking the Advantage of this Peace, for the rooting out of Idolatry, and the Propagation of Christianity throughout the World, we cannot chuse a Subject more becoming the Day, than to consider, What is the use we ought to make of God's Blessings, and how careful Christians ought are to be, in not abusing, to his Dishonor, what he gives them for their Comfort.

'Tis plain, upon the first Reflection, that Blessings receiv'd from God, require an Acknowledgment in the Receiver, and that his first Duty is to confess God to be the Giver, and then with Grateful Heart and Lips daily to return Thanks for whatever he has receiv'd from his Bountiful Hand. This Gratitude cannot be Substantial and Sincere, except, as he acknowledges God to be the Author of all Blessings receiv'd,

receiv'd, so he confesses him to be the end of all; and hence owns it Just, that whatever has been the Effect of his Goodness, should be referr'd to his Glory. And because God desires to be glorified in his Creatures, bestowing Blessings on Man, that by them he may be better furnish'd with Opportunities of working out his Salvation, hence, not only his own Interest, but Gratitude obliges him, upon the receiving of Blessings, to consider in what use and manner he can make them serviceable for his Eternal Good. This is the End, and ought to be the use of all those Favors, which God's Bountiful Hand pours forth upon Christians, whether they be Health, Peace, Riches, Friends, Preferments, or whatever else they be. From this Principle, there is Reason to hope, that those Christians make a good use of the Divine Blessings, who every Day considering the Advantages they have in what they receive from God, every Day look on these as forcible Motives to praise his Name; and endeavor to pay this Homage, not in a passing Thought, but by summoning all the Powers of their Soul, and with a Sense proportion'd to his Gifts. Who, secondly,

condly, daily offer his Blessings to the same Fountain of Goodness, from whence they flow, earnestly begging his Grace to direct them, in what manner they may best employ them to his Glory, and the Good of their own Souls. Who, thirdly, take some leisure Hours, and this often, to consider, what Advantages they have above others, who want, what they enjoy; and that a Return being expected answerable to what they receive, think how they have hitherto been wanting in this Obligation, and in what Ways they may best satisfy it for the time to come. Who, lastly, make Resolutions suitable to the Light God shall give them, and let no Consideration of Custom, or of what Constructions the World will make, hinder them from the Execution of what they resolve. Those Christians, who take this Method, are certainly in the best way of making a right use of whatever they receive, and cannot fail, both in discovering and avoiding those many Abuses, which will be their Condemnation; who, going on without thinking, ungratefully prostitute the Means of honoring God, and saving their Souls, to the vile Ends of Pride,

Pride, Sensuality and Self love, and to all manner of Corruption.

This was the Method of this Holy Bishop; who seeing the Scourge of a severe and long Persecution, by the favor of Heaven, taken off his People, presently turn'd his Thoughts to consider, by what ways he might best honor God by his own Gifts; and for this end, instead of abusing Peace, in gratifying the Inclinations of corrupt Nature, in the several Branches of Self-love, Intemperance and Ambition, he resolv'd, the only use of the Liberty God had given them, should be in the greater Liberty of serving him. In consequence to which Resolution, he drew the Worship of Christians out of their Ancient Causes, into Magnificent Churches, there to glorifie God in public, and publish his Truths to Unbelievers; Councils were assembled to condemn the Errors of perverse Men, and many Decrees were establish'd for the better Disciplin of the Church, and for their Direction, who were to be its Pastors. This was truly to offer to God his own Blessings, and to seek him in his own Gifts; I wish succeeding Ages had follow'd the Steps of this their Pastor; God had been more glorified,

rified, our Neighbor had been less scandalized, and many Abuses had been prevented, which have been laid hold of by ill Men, as Arms to fight against the Church, and have made the Enemies of God blaspheme. I wish, at least, that all Christians, in our present Age, would study this Lesson; there being nothing that more contributes to the rend'ring it so remarkably Vicious, as the little Sense of this Duty, and the Want of understanding its weight.

Cast but an Eye amongst the Sinners of the World, and observe its most general Corruptions; and if, in making up the Accompts, you discover that Sins are there most numerous, where God's Blessings most abound, then you must conclude, that not considering the true use of God's Gifts, but abusing them, is one general Occasion of Man's Unhappiness. And that this may be decided, see first, what is the Abuse of Riches: These are the Gift of God, by which Christians may take large Steps towards Heaven, in those many Works of Piety and Charity, which God has own'd to be most valuable with him; and whilst Christians, upon receiving them, ought to consider, in what Ways
to

to make a Return to the Giver, and how to make their Advantage of them, there is no Place for such Proposals; but Pride, Intemperance, and Sensuality stepping in, all is turn'd into Channels, that flow from Sin, and not from the Gospel; and hence the Blessings of Heaven are so generally perverted, that the Principal Use of them is in going farther from God. This is too much done in a Scandalous Way; but let those, who are more reserv'd, examine their Accompts by the weights of the Sanctuary, and, I fear, so much will be found placed to Prodigality, Vanity, Gratifying Appetite and Curiosity, and courting a World, which ought to be despis'd, that even these will be confounded with the Guilt of not having consider'd the Use of God's Blessings, but in Proportion to what they have receiv'd more than others, have so far indulg'd those Inclinations in them, which by the Directions of the Gospel, they ought to have subdued.

See again, what is the Abuse of Time; this is granted for the gaining of Eternity, and yet who are the Persons, that abuse it most, but those, who have it most at Command? These, who are
exempted

exempted from the Sentence of gaining Bread with the Sweat of their Brows, how great Advantage might they make of their Liberry, above those, who are subject to this Penance? How might they improve their Souls in the Knowledge of God, and of all the Works of his Power and Mercy? How constant might they be in their Hours of Prayer and Reading, and in frequenting the Sacraments? How might they take Leisure to look into all their own Ways, and inspect the Management of as many, as they have in their Charge? What Opportunities might they have of doing infinit Works of Charity, in visiting the Sick, Hospitals and Prisons; in comforting the Poor, Afflicted and Widows; in making an Interest for those, who are oppress'd by the more Powerful, or unjustly persecuted; in reconciling Differences, or contriving Helps for such as are in Spiritual or Temporal Distress? Infinit Ways there are, by which these, who have both Money and Leisure, might be profitable in their Generation, and do Good both to their Neighbors and themselves; and some there are, who do so, at least, in some measure; but how few are they, who perform not the

the half part of what they have in their Power? And how many, who abuse the happy Circumstances, in which God has placed them, in making their Time wholly serviceable to Sloth, Sleep, Vanity, unprofitable Visits, idle Conversation, Gaming, and Dangerous, Excessive or Sinful Entertainments? And is it not hence, that great Numbers of these, who have Opportunity for knowing and doing more than their Neighbors, are more Ignorant of God and his Ways, and both in Works of Charity, and in the Constancy of Prayer and Sacraments, are even outdone by those, who labor at the Anvil, and work for Bread? And this is the good Use they make of God's Blessings, this the Return for all his Mercies. God has distinguish'd them by Signal Favors, and they distinguish themselves by remarkable Follies and Ingratitude.

See again, what is the Abuse of that better part of Time, which is consecrated to God, I mean *Sundays* and *Holidays*. The Institution of these is an Effect of the Divine Goodness, laying us out Time, wherein, remov'd from the usual Dissipations of Business, and the World, we may apply our Thoughts
to

to the only necessary Work of Eternity, and make our Approaches towards Heaven. And what is the too general Practice? It is but a moderate Abuse, to give these Days to Sleep, Sloth, Vanity, Entertainments, and idle Conversation. But as for great Numbers, do not the Scandalous Cries of Prophane and Sinful Liberties bear witness, that God is more dishonor'd on these Days, than on any others, and that Christians, instead of seeking and drawing nearer God, depart farther from him? This we have particular Reason to apprehend of this Holy Time, when under the Color of Society and Mirth, all Places are fill'd with Disorders; Gluttony and Intemperance are promoted, Prodigality and Immoderate Gaming seem due to the time, and Dancing is abus'd to usher in Vice. So much, at least, of these Corruptions are spread, that a moderate Sense of Piety cannot but lament these Disorders, and must necessarily be apprehensive of the Displeasure of God, even the same, which the Prophet *Isaiab*, c. i. in the Name of God declar'd to the Jews, *Neomeniam & Sabbatum & Festivitates alias non feram; iniqui sunt catus vestri Calendas vestras & Solemnitates vestras* *paupit*

odivit anima mea, facta sunt mihi molesta.
Your New-moons and Sabbaths, and other Festivals I will not bear; your Assemblies are Wicked; your Calends and your Solemnities my Soul Hates, they are become Troublesome to me. These were all Days of God's Institution, which he had commanded the Jews to observe; but they had so generally abus'd them to his Dishonor, that, he says, they were become hateful to him. And who is there now, that reflects upon the many Abominations, which are mixt with our present Solemnities, but must fear the same displeasure of God, and that our Festivals are such, as his Soul Hates?

In this manner, which every Way we look, whether upon Private or Public Blessings, we see them under a general Abuse, and that God's greater Mercies are made the greater Occasions of Sin. And is it not this our preverse Ingratitude, which obliges God to withdraw his Favors from those Persons and Nations, for whom there is yet Mercy left, that by Affliction he may open their Eyes, and by his Scourges bring them to the Sense of their past Follies and present Duty? O God, we have Reason here to Lament this our Misery, which must be so highly provoking to thy Goodness, in the Infinite Abuses

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Abuses of all its Branches : We have Reason to bewail our unhappy Temper, which grows worse with Benefits : We know, how to Hate this in others, when we are the Benefactors ! Teach us, O God, to Hate it in our selves ; and in order to this, Grant us now a true Sense of all thy Gifts, and of the Obligation we have of using them in such a manner, that it may be to our true Advantage, and thy Glory.

The Circumcision, or New-years Day.

CHRIST undertaking on this Day the Work of our Redemption, and, in the Holy Name of Jesus owning himself to be our Saviour, we are, on this Day, to consider, what it is to be a Follower of Christ ; especially, since in the Sacrament of Baptism, succeeding the Ancient Circumcision, we first become Christians, it must be a proper Subject at this time, to examin, what it is to be a Christian.

To say a Christian, is to say one, who follows Christ, in Believing what he teaches, and Doing what he commands ; being design'd for the Eternal Possession of

of God, the Christian is to have a Sense of God, and of his Truths. That there may be no mistake in these, he is only there to learn them, where God has commanded them to be taught; because these being Mysteries above Reason, there can be no Security of being taught the Truth, where Human Reason has not a Divine Light to direct it, and a Divine Assistance to secure it from Error. And this being Promis'd to the Church of Christ, every Christian is bound to seek for this Church, and, according to Christ's Command, learn from her the Truths of God. If any of these Truths, in this manner deliver'd to him, are so Superior to Reason, that this cannot comprehend them, he is still to submit, and receive them with a Free Assent; because it is no Surprize, to Reason, to find that God is above Man; and 'tis an Act of Reason, that Man should be subject to God; that God is the best Teacher of his own Truths; and therefore, that Man should there learn them, where God has not only Commanded, but likewise Promis'd, they shall be taught with Truth to the End of the World. Hence, whoever receives not the Truths thus deliver'd with an Entire and Humble Faith; whoever disapproves the Way, by which Christ has com-

commanded them to be taught, is not a Follower of Christ, but one, who so far departs from him.

Amongst these Truths, being assur'd that God is an Infinite and Eternal Good, and that he has Created Man for the Eternal Possession of himself, he is to have his Soul rais'd up with the Hopes of coming to the Possession of him. But because he sees nothing in himself, or of himself, proportion'd to this End, of becoming eternally Happy with God; hence the Ground, on which this Hope is entirely to Subsist, must be on the Power, Goodness, and Promises of God, who has engag'd to give Helps suitable to this End. This Hope the Christian is still to retain in the midst of all Difficulties and Trials; because God's Power and Goodness are still the same; and whatever happens being the Appointment of his Will, there is no difficulty, but what the Christian is to look upon, as the Means, which God has ordain'd for Working out his Salvation, and therefore is not to weaken, but exercise and encrease both his Faith and his Hope.

The Christian knowing God, in whom he believes and hopes, to be Infinite in Goodness, Holiness, and in all Perfections, must hence see it necessary and just, that

that he love God with all his Heart;
that he seek him with all his Strength;
that he desire to be united to him with
all his Afflictions, and that he serve him
with all the Powers of Body and Soul.
Hence, tho' he finds his Affections in-
clining him to Creatures, he is still to
love God above them all, and to love
them no farther, than God permits, and
ever with Reference to his Will; because
the Will of God being infinitely Holy, and
his own Will Corrupt, he can no other-
wise seek God, and do what is pleasing to
him, than as far as he subjects his Will
to God's, and makes God's Will the Rule
of his own. And here he sees himself
under a perpetual necessity of Examining
and Observing all his own Inclinations,
Affections and Desires, and of Modera-
ting, Denying and Renouncing all these,
whenever he finds them not agreeable to
the Will of God; because he cannot be
United to God, but by doing his Will;
and whenever he follows Inclinations
contrary to the Will of God; he follows
not God, but departs from him, and
makes that his God, whatever it be, that
he prefers before God. This must be his
Rule in regard of all things, that are
either pleasing or displeasing to him;
so that neither to obtain what he desires,
nor

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nor to avoid what he fears, must he do anything contrary to the Will of God; for if he does otherwise, 'tis evident, he loves or fears something more than God, and then God is not a God to him; and so it is most certainly with all those, who either in seeking what Delights, or for escaping what is likely to be Troublesome, do what they know to be disagreeable to the Divine Will.

But because the Will of God cannot be a Rule but where it is known, therefore is it necessary the Christian should use his endeavors for knowing the Divine Will; and this being Manifested in the Commandments, but more particularly to the Christian, in the Life of Christ, in the Gospel, where his Life is recorded, and in the Sacred Epistles penn'd by his Apostles, therefore is the Christian to make these his Study; that by the more lively Idea of the Divine Will thus Manifested above Exception, he may have the greater Assurance in doing well, and the stronger Check, when he is going out of the Way. Having discover'd the Will of God by these Helps, he is to let no Practice of the World, no Authority or Custom of Men, be a Motive for dispensing with this Rule; for that if Custom or Practice are found disagreeable to the Will of God, the

the Will of God must have the preference with him, and all such Customs must be disapprov'd or condemn'd, according as they are found to deviate from the Rule; and such as do not so, are not the Followers of Christ, but of the World.

And therefore because God has Manifested his Will, in forbidding Drunkenness, Gluttony, Revellings, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Filthy Communication or Talking, Prophaneneſs, Cursing, Lying, Malice, Contention, Hatred, Animosity, Anger, Envy, Backbiting, Revenge, Whiſpering, Raſh Judgment, Faſe Accuſation, Pride, Diſobedience, Theft, Murther, Injuſtice, Deceit, Deſſauding, Over-reaching, Doing Wrong, Self-love, Fierceneſs, Love of Pleaſures, Sloth, Impatience, Hereſie, Schiſm, Covetouſneſs, therefore is he bound to look upon all theſe, as unlawful; and tho' the World by a too general Practice, has taken off the Scandal from the greateſt part, and by rendering them Familiar, has given Authority to them; yet is he to think no otherwiſe of them, than according to the Judgment paſſ'd, and therefore to avoid them, becauſe God has forbid them.

Again, ſince God has manifeſted his Holy Will, in requiring of all Chriſtians,

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that

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that they should mortifie the Deeds of the Flesh, deny themselves, overcome the World, renounce Impiety and Worldly Affections, walk in the Newness of Life, put on our Lord Jesus Christ, become a new Creature in Christ, love God and their Neighbor, follow Gentleness, Meekness, Temperance, Humility, keep Peace, do Good to all, do Good for Evil, forgive Injuries, pray for Persecutors, love Enemies, be fervent in Prayer, given to Hospitality, withdraw themselves from every Brother, that walketh disorderly, not live to themselves, but to him, who died for them, &c. hence he is to think himself oblig'd both to approve and practice what is thus recommended, and not to esteem it less his Duty, because the World, following the Dictates of its own Corruption, has laid a Scandal upon some Points of it, and render'd others contemptible.

Having thus discover'd the Will of God, and acknowledging it his Duty to follow it, he knows his own Corruption and Weakness to be such, that he can no otherwise hope to come to the Practice of the least part of his Duty, but by the Assistance of God, and Help of his Grace, whose Gift it must be, both to begin and finish. For this Reason he is in a perpetual

ual Necessity of asking the Grace of God, and confesses, that if he be not both constant and careful in Prayer, and in seeking Help by all those Means, which God has ordain'd for this end, he must expect to remain in his own natural Poverty, incapable of doing Good, and expos'd to all Evil.

And because he is sensible, that nothing is so great an Impediment of Grace, as his own Unworthiness and Sin, therefore he knows it to be his daily Obligation, to humble himself in all Ways, both before God and Man, and to seek Mercy by all those Means, which God has own'd to be most Powerful with him, in inclining him to Mercy. For this end, he ceases not to solicit Heaven by Prayer, and by the Sighs and Tears of a Contrite Heart, he confesses his Sins, and appeals to the Passion and Blood of his Redeemer, he gives Alms, forgives all Injuries and Offences, labors to be patient under all Trials, humbles himself in Fasting, punishes his Sins by Mortification, endeavors to overcome his own Corruption by Self-denials, avoids the Occasions of Evil, and gives Proof of his Sincerity, by withdrawing himself from such Company, Entertainments, Divertisements, Customs, and even Business, which he

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finds enflame his Passions, incline him to Evil, are Snares to Sin, feed Corruption, make him in Love with Earth, and lessen his Desires of Heaven. For this end he sees himself often oblig'd to separate from Friends, to forsake the common Ways of the World, to deny himself many Liberties, which others take, and to be often singular in what he does; because Vice, Pride, and Self-love, have so widen'd the Ways of most Christians, and mix'd them with so much Corruption, that to please the World, in what it approves, is the certain way to displease God; and how then can he hope to come to the Possession of him?

Here is the true Character of a Christian, taken from Christ, who is the best Model, and from the Gospel, the best Original; it is the Business of all, who profess themselves Christians, to labor in coming up to this Character; but it is thou, O God, who hast given the Command, must likewise give Light and Strength, for forming their Lives according to thy Law; give them this Grace, I beseech thee; for thy most Holy Faith lyes under many Scandals, thro' the great Corruption of its Professors; and the Way to Heaven is disputed, thro' the Number and Authority of those, who forsake it.

When

When wilt thou remedy this, O God? Begin this Day, and now, by the powerful Influence of thy Grace, may all Christians look into the Obligations of their State, and reforming whatever is disorderly, bring their Lives to be Christian, as well as their Name.

*Sunday between the Circumcision
and Epiphany.*

IT being a time, wherein we commemorate the greatest of all Mercies towards us, in the Son of God, being made Man, and Born for our Salvation, I cannot but again recommend to Christians, the great Care they ought to have, in laying hold of the Mercies and Grace, which God offers, and not to let their Neglect be the Occasion of these passing by, without leaving lasting Effects in their Souls. We have a late Instance, as 'tis to be fear'd, of this Neglect, in the Shepherds, who went to visit our new-born Savior. They were fully convinc'd of the Information given them by the Angels; they spoke of what they had heard and seen, to their Acquaintance, and fill'd them with Admiration. And yet it does

not appear, that this had any Fruit. For when Christ came to exercise his Ministry, no Body at *Bethlehem* seem'd to remember that he had been Born there; he pass'd with them for a Prophet of *Nazareth*; and the Wonders of his Birth were wholly effac'd. There is therefore Reason to fear, that neither the Shepherds, nor the People of *Bethlehem*, were Solicitous to improve or preserve that Grace, with which they had been priviledg'd by a particular Favor of Heaven, and that thro' their Neglect, it was only a passing, and not a fixt Grace, in the greatest part of those, that receiv'd it.

Now if the Graces of God are, in themselves, Inestimable Goods, they must become their Misfortune, where they pass away without their intended Fruit; because they cannot be thus unfixt and fruitless, but thro' the Neglect and Corruption of the Heart of Man. All Grace, according to the Inclination of that Goodness, with which God gives it, ought to be fixt and permanent; but, when by the Malice of Man it is rejected, or render'd useless, by his Neglect, the Soul becomes infinitely more Criminal. Thus it is expressly desided by Christ in the Case of *Bethsaida* and *Capernaum*, declaring, that for the Abuse of the Favors he had shew'd

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shew'd them, their Judgment shall be more Terrible than that of *Sodom*. 'Tis little consider'd how great is the Evil of dissipating or wasting so Valuable a Treasure, as is that of the Graces and Lights of God; and Men generally think themselves acquitted from all account, by being depriv'd of their Fruit; but God judges not so. For he will demand an account of all his Gifts; these are so many Talents, of which he exacts the Use, and expects, we should make an Advantage of them; and there can be nothing but Woes to them, who let them pass away without Fruit, and much more to those perverse ones, who turn them against God, in making them the Instruments of their Passions.

'Tis generally believ'd, that Christians are more favor'd by God, than the *Jews* or *Turks*; and much more than those unhappy Nations, whom he has left without any Knowledge of himself, or of his Religion, in which he will be serv'd; and there is Reason enough to believe so, if we judge by the Numerous Effects of his Goodness towards them. But if we judge by the Event, we have Reason to look upon the greatest part of Christians, as the most Miserable of all Men upon the Face of the whole Earth. For it be-

ing Visible, that they Abuse the Graces of God, and Waste this Inestimable Treasure by their Corrupt Lives; what can be expected, but that at the Day of Judgment, they will find their unhappy Portion to be in Torments far different from those of the *Jews, Turks and Americans*, and generally of all those, who have had no Knowledge of the Truth? Wherefore it ought to be the settled Thought of every one, who professes himself Christian, that there is no Mean for him; but that he must necessarily exceed all Infidels either in Happiness or Misery; and if in Misery, that the Excess will be infinitely Terrible. For there being so great difference between Hell and Paradise, it is not to be thought, that there is no difference between Hell and Hell; because the Scripture Assures us of the contrary, which makes Distinction of Darkness; and therefore it is not to be question'd, but the difference is to such a degree, that tho' all be infinitely Miserable, yet there is some that seems a kind of Happiness to those more unhappy Ones, who are plung'd deeper in that place of Horror.

Hence it follows, that all the Graces, whatever they be, which we receive from God, are not only the Subject of Gratitude and Joy, but likewise of Solicitude and
Terror;

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Terror ; not so, that the Solitude ought wholly to extinguish the Joy ; nor yet the Joy wholly put by the Solitude. *Servite Domino in timore, & exultate ei cum tremore* ; there must be both Joy and Terror. And this brings upon Christians Two Essential Duties : The First is, Not to rest satisfied in whatever Grace has been receiv'd ; but, upon receiving it, to Solicit Heaven for the Continuation and good Use of it, which is another Grace to be obtain'd by Prayer, and by all that which is equivalent to Prayer, as Gratitude and good Works. The Second is, with a Watchful Eye to observe, what is the Occasion of God's Graces, Gifts or Lights, being fruitless in us. There are many, but these may be the most General.

First, We often abuse those Truths, of which God gives us the Light, by making them the Subject of our Vanity. *Quidam*, says St. Augustin, *quærunt Sapientiam, non ut fruantur, sed ut insulentur*. We value our selves upon our Knowledge, make some use of it for directing others, but not for our own Conduct. *2dly*, We have often restless Curiosity, which carries us from Object to Object, without letting us fix on any ; so that upon discovering any one Truth, we presently leave it, for to

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enquire after some other; and hence if we retain the memory, 'tis not so, as to make it any measure of our Lives. 3dly, We let our Hearts be carried with so much eagerness to the things of this World, that by this immoderate Concern, they are turn'd from the Truths of an Eternal Concern, to what makes a more sensible impression in them. Whence such Truths either abide on in the Spirit, without having any influence upon the Heart, or else the memory of them is quite lost, stifled by the number of new Objects, which press in upon the Mind. 'Tis very likely, that thus the Inhabitants of *Bethlehem* came to forget the Birth of Christ. They were touch'd with admiration, upon hearing what had happen'd to the Shepherds: But the common Objects, with which their Hearts were fill'd, soon oblig'd this to give way: So that they made but little enquiry after that Information, in which their Eternity was concern'd; and if they had any Reflection, it was, very likely, no other, than to begin to doubt of the Truth, because they saw no Remarkable Effects of it.

But it was not so in the Blessed Virgin, who, as the Gospel says, *Luke 2. 19. Conseruabit omnia uerba hæc, conferens in corde suo.* kept all these things, and me-
ditated

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dictated on them in her Heart. This is but a short Character of the Blessed Virgin, and yet full whilst the Word of God is her Witness, that she retain'd all those Lights of Grace, which she had receiv'd in fulness, *Gratia plena*, without losing any. *Conservabat omnia*. And whilst we may hence judge, that the only Business of her Life, was to Meditate on the Words and Actions of Jesus Christ, she gives a fuller Instruction in this Subject, than what we receive from the particular Histories of other Saints; whilst she teaches us, not only to see and hear, but likewise to lay up in our Hearts whatever Lights God Communicates to us, and so to digest them, that they may be the Life of our Affections, and the Nourishment of our Souls in all that belongs to God. This we cannot Hope for, but by a Vigorous Application of our Mind to the Divine Truths, and making them as much our Study, as Worldly Men do their Designs of Interest or Honor; and those, who will not be thus Industrious, it is no wonder, if they see but little Fruit of all they know; since tho' the Sentence of Eating our Bread in the Sweat of our Brows, admits of some Dispensation, whilst a Good Inheritance gives Bread without Labor; yet, as to the Spiritual Food,

Food, there is no Exemption; because whatever Seeds of Grace or Light fall upon the Soul, if they be not retain'd with Care, and by a due Application of the Mind Digested into Nourishment, there can be no Probability of their concurring any thing to the Spiritual Life. Whence I am inclin'd to fear, that all those Christians, who take little or no Time to be serious; tho' they have their times of Prayer, and it may be of other Devotions, yet will allow themselves no leisure, for making any Reflection upon themselves, upon their State, Method of Life, or upon such Thoughts, as the Divine Grace may have suggested, either immediately from Heaven, or from Books or Friends; I am inclin'd, I say, to fear, that these make no Advantage of the Divine Grace, but like the Men of *Bethlehem*, let the Croud of Common Objects smother those better Thoughts, which, according to the Order of Providence, were design'd for giving them New Life, and so may be number'd amongst those, who Neglect the Grace of God, and receive no Benefit from his Blessings. How great the account of this Neglect will be, has been already consider'd, and so justly, that I cannot but Hope, a due Reflection upon it, will awaken their Care, who are concern'd,

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cern'd, and convince them of the Necessity of better Management.

This Management must be taken from the Model given by the Blessed Virgin *Mary* : The Suggestions of Heaven must be entertain'd as Lights, to discover the Disorders and Errors of Life, and as Guides into better Ways. This Method is follow'd, when Christians, after Reading, Praying, or frequenting the Sacraments, take some leisure Time, either Sitting or Walking, to consider upon whatever Lights God has dispens'd to them ; and then comparing them with the General Practice of their Lives, Contrive and Study, with the same Solicitude, as is usual in Worldly Affairs, how to bring them to better Measures, and reform in themselves whatever they observe to be disorderly : By the frequent Repetition of this Method, Divine Truths, and the Principles of the Gospel, will be strongly rooted in them, Grace will not only give light touches upon the Spirit, but become permanent in their Hearts, the Vigor of this will make them Solicitous to reform, and fit them for Manly Conflicts with whatever is Rebellious in them. Thus by degrees, Prodigality and Vanity may be abated, Intemperance will appear hateful, Covetousness will have the
Face

Face of Idolatry, Sensuality look horrid as Hell; Passions will be moderated, the Afflictions level'd to their proper Object, and the World overcome. This is the proper Effect of Grace; and where-ever it is so manag'd, as to bring forth this Fruit, there can be no danger of being call'd to an account for Abusing or Neglecting it.

And wilt thou not, O God, give this Grace to Christians, that they may be no more Careless or Prodigal of thy Gifts; but that by better Management, they may be Solicitous to bring forth Fruit of whatever they have receiv'd? Permit not, O God, thy Blessings thus to be lost, and so many Souls to perish with them. We confess all to be the Effect of their Blindness and Folly, who know not the Value of what they receive, or what they lose; and despise the Loss of what is yet to come. But we know, thy Power can outdo their Folly; outdo it then; and thus shew both thy Power and thy Mercy.

Epiphany, *or* Twelfth-day.

THis Day being kept Holy, in Memory of the Three Kings being call'd out of

of the East, and by the Light of an unusual Star conducted to the Stable of *Bethlehem*, where they acknowledg'd and ador'd their New-born Savior; our Lesson on this Festival ought to be taken from them; and out of the many Instructions, given by them, I make choice of that Remarkable Sincerity, with which they undertook, carried on, and finish'd this their Progress to *Bethlehem*: And this being most Observable in their Faith and their Courage, to these Two Points I shall confine this Discourse.

Their great Sincerity in Believing appears, in following the Light of Heaven, as soon as they saw it, and committing themselves entirely to the Conduct of the Star, without asking such Questions, as Curiosity, Distrust or Fear, might have Suggested, and made Plausible Objections for a delay. And again, in Confessing Jesus their God and Redeemer, tho' they found him an Infant, Poor and Forsaken, and without any of those Circumstances, which Human Reason might have expected, for Manifesting his Authority, his Power, or his Divinity: Sense and Naked Reason here afford them no help, and yet they Believe and Adore. This was the Simplicity of the First Believers amongst the *Gentiles*, which rested with an Entire Confidence and Faith in God, without

out seeking any Support from Creatures, but even then Believing, when there was not so much as an Argument of Probability from any Reason, but that which was subject to Faith, and wholly built on God. Such as this was the Faith of *Abraham*, stil'd by God himself the Father of the Faithful, *who* as *St. Paul* says, *Rom. 4. 18. against Hope believ'd in Hope*; that is, as the Apostle Explicates it, was fully perswaded of what God had promis'd, tho' there was no Probability from Human Reason, but all its Arguments strongly pleading against it.

Such ought to be the Simplicity of all Believers in the Faith of what God teaches. Where his Light shews the Truth, they submit with a ready Assent, and think it an Affront both to God and their Faith, to consult with any thing Created for the Confirmation of what he has said. 'Tis nothing to them, whether Reason, of it self, approves or doubts; for as its Approbation can give no Authority to what God has said, so its Doubts cannot bring God's Truth into Question. Hence, in whatever Case God has spoke, Reason is to them altogether useless, except in this one Act, of judging it Reasonable, that Man should submit to God. Upon this Head, Faith is ever Rational, tho'

tho' Reason cannot reach even to the least Glimpse of the Truth propos'd ; and tho' this be represented as a Scandal to Reason, and a Blind Submission, by Presuming Men ; yet the Christian must own, that Reason must be subject to God ; that 'tis not its Reproach, but its Glory, thus to submit ; and that those great Rationalists act most unreasonably, who Reason upon what God has said, and no otherwise receive it than as far as this concurs and judges it fit to be believ'd ; by which, whatever Faith they have, comes to be no more than a Faith in their own Reasoning, and not in God.

And is not this the full Character of the Modern Faith ? For whilst our Forefathers believ'd God in Establishing a Church, and promising, that it should teach to the end of the World ; whilst they receiv'd the Doctrines it taught, and in receiving them depended wholly with their Faith on God, because they believ'd, like *Abraham*, in God's Promises, who had engag'd his Word for its teaching them Truth ; now there is no such Faith acknowledg'd due, either to what the Church or Scripture delivers ; but every Point is brought to be examin'd by Reason (every Private Reason being encourag'd to this Bold Undertaking) and

as far as this seems to comprehend, and judges it Reasonable to approve it, so far is Faith to submit. And is not this a Faith in their own Reason, and not in God ; since they cannot depend on the Ways of God's Appointment, but calling these in question, rest in Determinations of their own Judgment, and so come to make their Faith at length no more than a Piece of Philosophy ? Here then is wanting that Sincerity, in Believing God, of which the Three Wise Men have given us an Example ; and therefore being not Conform to these, who were the First Fruit of the *Gentiles*, nor to the Submission exacted, by Christ's Command, from the First Believers of the Gospel, is there not Reason enough to suspect it, as not being a Christian Faith ?

The Sincerity of these Holy Kings may be wanting another Way ; whilst God giving a Light to many, as he did to these, all do not follow it, as these did ; but find Reasons for wholly putting by, or making exception against the Light, that appears. I cannot tell in particular, who these are ; but by the Experience I have had of some, who for Years have stood out against that Light, which gave Testimony within them ; of others, who for a time have neglected it, I cannot but apprehend,

apprehend, many more may be in the same unhappy Circumstances; especially since I find in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Gospels, that upon the first Preaching of the Christian Faith, there are several Instances of Persons, who prevail'd on by Passion and Temporal Motives, not only rejected, but by Violence oppos'd it, I cannot think this Conjecture is to be Censur'd of Rashness; and therefore by the Example of these Holy Kings, this Advice cannot be unseasonable to all, who know, how great is the Interest of Truth, that they would be Sincere in their Enquiry, and not permit Human Considerations to smother in them whatever Glimpse of Light God is pleas'd to Communicate to them; but examin it with the same Sincerity and Industry, as they generally do such Thoughts as occur, with the Prospect of bettering themselves in the World, and with the Hopes of some Temporal Advantage. In this Case few fail of being True to themselves; and 'tis only this I Advise in their much greater Concern of Eternity, which so entirely depends on the Truth.

Since therefore all must be sensible of the Falseness of our Nature, and of the Manifold Treachery of our Reasoning, in being easily impos'd on by Fallacies,

cies, and Biass'd by Education, Prejudice, Passion, and Human Respects; have not all sufficient Motives for being Jealous of themselves, so far at least, as to bring all their Reasoning by a *melius inquirendo*, to a Second and Third Examin; by this Means to make a better Discovery, whether the Sentence brought in be truly Equitable, as it ought to be in an Affair of so great Importance? What then can Christians do less, even when the Case seems decided, than put these and such other Questions to themselves? Has not the Consideration of Worldly Interest had an Influence in the Decision? Has not the regard of Friends been of great weight in carrying it? Has not a certain Awe of what the World will say, strongly press'd for it? Has not a sort of Pride, under the Apprehension of a Change being Contemptible, given a Check to a Thorough Enquiry? Has not the Fore-sight of Trouble or Loss put in its Caveats? Has not Sloth discourag'd it? Has not Passion pronounc'd upon Old Prejudices? Has not Education and Custom pass'd upon them for Reason? Have not they set a Value upon the Authority of Persons, by Affection, and condemn'd elsewhere a much greater, only upon Hear-says, or a lame unexamin'd Information?

tion? Have not Reports been taken for unquestionable Evidence? Have not the Truth of Things been judg'd by Party, and Favor determin'd, what was fit to be believ'd? Christians cannot do less than propose to themselves these and such like Queries; and not take that for an Answer, which is uppermost; but look for this, by searching into the most hidden folds of the Heart, so to discover, whether they have been truly sincere in following the Light of Heaven, or have neglected it, by yielding to such Reasons, which having observable Deceit in them, bring them under the guilt of being wilfully deceiv'd. The great Concern of this Affair makes this a Duty; and I cannot but think if it were practis'd, it would make such Discoveries, as would be follow'd either with Repentance or Confusion.

For tho' the greatest numbers may live in a sort of Peace, yet who does not know, that Conscience, like the False Prophets, may proclaim Peace, when there is, or ought to be, none? And since God told *Israel*, by the Prophet *Jeremy*, *Thy Habitation is in the midst of deceit; thro' deceit they refuse to know me*, Chap. 9. 6. I cannot but think the same Deceit is an equal blind upon Christians; and that the only reason

reason, why many know not the Truths of God, is because they deceive themselves. But since God does not excuse this Ignorance in the *Jews*, upon the Consideration of their being deceiv'd; but charges them with absolutely refusing to know him; *Renuerunt me scire*; must it not be Charity, to put Christians upon using Endeavors for knowing their own Hearts, lest otherwise by imposing upon themselves, they come to have all their Mistakes of God's Ways to be charg'd upon them, as a wilful Ignorance of God?

But this Enquiry is to be made, not only in Points of Doctrine or Faith, but likewise in all that belongs to Practice; for certainly Mistakes here are as numerous and as dangerous, as in Matters of Faith. The same Corruption already mention'd prevails here too; and when things are to be determin'd of *Right* and *Just*, Passion, Interest and Affection set on the Bench, and by their Direction Sentence is pass'd. Hence, do not many live in the practice of evident Injustice, others in the breach of Charity, and others in so many Disorders, as to be a Scandal to what they profess, and yet seem as well satisfied, as if there were no reason to scruple what they do? These however do not want interior Light, which,

which, at times, reproaches them; but the prevailing Passion is soon industrious to shut it out, or represent it as an unnecessary Scruple, and studies all ways to divert the Mind from any further Consideration of it. And here to remove all Fears, how many Arguments does it use? How is *Custom* alledg'd, and the Authority of others, who are esteem'd Persons of good Principles? How is the number of Offenders taken up to justify the Offence? How is the safety magnified, in doing things with a good Intention of meaning no harm? How great is render'd the danger of becoming scrupulous? How many Expressions of the Scripture are perverted in favor of their Disorder? How do they make their defence in the Failings of such, as there have the Character of Just? How are those, who reprove them, represented as Men of Particular Principles and Bigots? By these and other Arguments they put a Gag upon their Conscience; and thus go on with a seeming Peace, when all their Peace proceeds from nothing else, but hiding the Light from their own Eyes.

Now in all this, 'tis plain, they are not sincere; they will not give themselves leave to think in a Matter, which, if brought to a fair Conclusion, they foresee, would

would prove very troublesome, and oblige them to quit such Ways, which they are not willing to forsake. But if God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, sees all this, what will it avail them, that they blind themselves? Will not this their affected Ignorance be their Condemnation, instead of their Excuse? They have reason enough to apprehend it, and I wish they would provide against it, by being more sincere in what so nearly concerns them. And now being oblig'd to put off the other part of this Discourse till the next *Sunday*, I beseech thee, O God, to have Compassion upon all, who are in Darkness, and likewise upon all thy Faithful, and especially to take from them all Treachery and False-heartedness, so contrary to their own Eternal Interest, and so hateful to thee. Give them a true inward Light, and Strength to follow it; that by this making a Judgment of all things, they may have a horror of all Evil, and in earnest pursue those Ways, which lead to thee.

Sunday within the Octave of
Epiphany.

THis being a Day, which makes a part of the great Festival of the *Epiphany*, or of the Three Kings coming from the *East*, and adoring Christ in the Manger, the Sincerity and Courage, with which they undertook and perform'd their Journey, shall be the Subject of the present Discourse.

Both these are very remarkably evident in them; first, in quitting their Countries, their Friends, and all the Comforts of Home, and exposing themselves to the Difficulties of an uncertain Journey, to follow the Light of Heaven, that appear'd before them: And this without any regard to what the World would say, in reproaching them of Folly or Madness, in venturing their All, without taking more time to examin, what that Star might be, and what Reason they had to believe it call'd upon them. Again, these were very Visible, in their coming to *Herod's Court*, and there enquiring of the Place, where the King of the *Jews* was Born, whose Star they had seen in the *East*, and whom they were come to adore. How many

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Exceptions might here Human Prudence have made, in suggesting the Dangers of such an enquiry ; especially at the Court of a Jealous Prince ? But such Considerations weigh not with these Pious Men, who, upon the disappearing of the Star, at their coming to *Jerusalem*, took this as a direction from Heaven ; that it was the Divine Will, they should there make an enquiry, and inform themselves : This was enough for them to lay by all Fear, and to comply with the Order of Heaven, without any Apprehension of what the Consequence might be ; leaving this entirely to him, whose Orders they obey'd. Here is the Courage of these Holy Princes, is exposing themselves to Dangers, in Submission to the Divine Will : Here is their Sincerity, in receiving the Commands of God, without Subjecting them to the Doubts of Fear, or to the Exceptions of an Unsatisfied and not Comprehending Reason.

This Sincerity and Courage are very necessary in a Christian Life ; because Virtue must here necessarily meet with Variety of Difficulties and Discouragements ; one great difficulty is in our own Nature, which being every way Corrupt, ever shews it self Averse to the Ways of God ; and this Aversion spreads

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it self into as many Branches, as there are Affections in the Heart to Evil, which must be Contradicted, where-ever the Principles of Virtue have the Command of the Soul. Hence the Inclination to Pleasure makes a great difficulty, because that Temperance which is so strictly enjoind by the Gospel, does not favor, but makes War against the greatest part of these Inclinations. The Love of Interest creates another difficulty, because Justice will not approve of many of those Ways, which Corruption suggests for the heaping up of Riches, or rendring Gain more considerable. Vanity, Pride and Ambition, raise other Difficulties, because the Humility of the Gospel-Spirit does not allow of any of those Methods, in which Nature is so unhappily Fruitful, in seeking Esteem, Applause, and Human Greatness. Sloth, and the Love of Ease, start other Difficulties, because the Laborious Spirit of the Gospel obliges the Christian to much greater Industry, than is agreeable to these Inclinations. Self-love makes other Difficulties, because that Penance, which the Gospel perscribes, for bringing all Passions into Subjection, and for doing Right to Justice in the Punishment of Sin, is an Obligation upon the Christian, of keeping a strict Watch over all the Inclinations,

nations, and renouncing the greatest part of them, in which Nature is Solicitous to gratifie it self. Intemperance, Covetousness, Impatience, Uncharitableness, the Desire of Revenge, and all the other Passions, to which we are subject, lay still New Difficulties before us; because the *Law* of Christ is a barr against all these, and engages the Christian in continual Endeavors for Defeating all their Attempts upon him.

Besides these, there are other Difficulties arising from the World; for whilst this is Corrupt, it cannot but make Opposition against all the Proposals of a Virtuous Life. There is difficulty in breaking or forsaking Company; difficulty in departing from the Common Modes and Immoderate Divertisements of the Age, difficulty in bearing the Reproaches of Companions, and the Various Constructions of others, who will both Wonder at and Interpret every Step, that is directed towards a Reformation. Infinit other Difficulties and Discouragements there are, which they must necessarily meet, who intend to Model their Lives by the Maxims of the Gospel.

But whatever they be, it is the Christian's part to be so Courageous, as not to let the Apprehension of these hinder him

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him from ent'ring upon a Vertuous Life, nor give any interruption to it, when he has begun. He is therefore to follow the Example of the Three Kings, and where-ever the Will of God is manifest, as it was to them, immediately, like them, to follow it. And because the Will of God is manifest, as to the avoiding all wilful Sin, and the Occasions that lead to it, and as to the Living according to the Rules prescrib'd by the Law of Christ; therefore it is his Duty forthwith to follow this Light, without consulting in this Affair, either his own Natural Inclination, or his Interest, or the World, or any other Apprehensions of Nicety or Fear, that may occur. And if these make their Attempts, as most certainly they will, it is the part of Christian Courage resolutely to stand against them, and to oppose Corruption with the Arms of Faith. If the Thoughts of Interest appear violent, he must set Eternity against Time, and thus break the force of its Assault, by shewing his much greater Interest to be in Heaven than in Earth; and that the Provision for his Soul ought to have the preference to that of his Body; for that the Evil of this Life must soon end, but the Evil of the other are Everlasting; and therefore, if Fear is to

have place, how can he answer it in Reason, to venture the Greater Evils, and be afraid of the Less? No, if he be to Fear, let the Less give Place to the Greater, rather fear Hell, than Starving. If Self-love presses for Indulgence, and sets forth the uneasiness of Self-denials under the most discouraging Colors, he must express his abhorrence of that Treachery, which offering Satisfaction pleases only for a Moment, and betrays the Soul to endless Misery: He must boldly assert the Cause he has undertaken, and declare it unworthy of the Disciple of the Cross, and a Crucified Master, to seek Softness and Ease: He must own himself a Soldier, and that his Business is not to lye still, or study to gratifie a Corrupt Nature, but to keep guard, and fight, and then only to look for Rest, when he has gain'd the Victory.

If Pride or Fear lay before him the Judgments of Men, and discourage him with the Apprehension, of what the World will say, and of all the Raileries, by which it will labor to render him ridiculous; he must reply, that what he has to fear is the Judgment of God; that if he can but find favor there, he has no reason to hearken to the Constructions of Men, but as so much idle and contemptible

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temptible Breath : That if he be despis'd by any, it will only be by such, whose Judgment is Corrupt, and their Scorn is much more desirable than their Applause, that while these pass their Censures on him, he shall be encourag'd and commended by the Good, make the Angels rejoice, and become the Favorite of Heaven.

If Human Prudence puts in Caveats against his Undertakings, by representing the danger of losing his Friends, of provoking Enemies, of being thrown upon an uncertain World, and expos'd to want; if it lays before him the infinit Temptations of Necessity, and that it is Rashness to draw upon himself such a Burthen, as he will never be able to bear: If it terrifies him with the weakness of Nature, which must be supported, and will not likely hold out, if with the danger of becoming Dejected and Melancholy, which will render him wholly unprofitable and useless both to God and Man; he must make one Return to all this; That he puts his Trust in God, whose Infinite Goodness cannot be wanting to those, who sincerely seek him. That 'tis his part to do his Duty, and leave the Consequences all to God; That God will either deliver him from Evil, or give him

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Grace to go thro' it ; That if God shall please to afflict him, his Blessed Will be done ; for that he had rather eat the Bread of Affliction, doing God's Will, than enjoy Plenty, in the Ways of Sin. How many are they, who by gratifying their own wicked Desires, lose the Esteem of their Friends, their Reputation in the World, waste their Estates, expose their Wives and Children to want, prejudice their Health, and shorten their Lives ? Now if Sinners venture so much in an ill Cause, and are so blindly bold, as not to value any other Consideration, so they can but please themselves ; why should others be so fearful and nice in doing their Duty, as to make a Monster of every difficulty, that appears in the Service of God ?

In this manner is the Christian to make his Defence, and stand resolutely against all the difficulties, that occur in the practice of a Virtuous Life ; so, as sincerely to undertake what he knows to be his Duty, and to pursue it with Courage. But while I speak of Duty, and the manifest Will of God, I do not perswade any, upon this Presumption, rashly to engage in what belongs not to them, or in what is evidently prejudicial to their Health ; neither do I encourage their
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Enthusiasms, who by the strength of their own Imaginations judge of the Will of God. No, I look upon all this, as Weakness, Pride, or a degree of Religious Madness. I would have all appearances of Light to be examin'd, and in all doubtful Cases nothing to be undertaken, but with the best Advice. Caution and Prudence are as necessary in Spiritual as in Temporal Affairs; and tho' Sincerity, may excuse many Faults before God; yet still there may be very ill Effects of Folly and Indiscretion.

What I press, is, that where Duty is evident, there the Christian would be truly Sincere and Courageous; undertaking it with a Confidence in God, who making it his Duty, calls him to it, and leaving the whole Issue to Him. Here I would not have Human Prudence put in for Counsellor, pretending to foresee Consequences, and advising delay to a more seasonable Time. I would not have Fears be regarded, nor the World consulted, nor Inclinations considered; for God's Will being infinitely above all these, it ought not to be review'd by them, nor be subject to their Appeals. Here then is the Point, upon which all depends; for whilst this Rule carries the Christian on steddily thro' every Duty;

he is in danger of a daily Miscarriage, if there be that Weakness in him, as to make Doubts in common Duties, and then to consult Fear, Interest, Inclination, and the World, for their Determination. For what can be expected here, when the Referees are all Parties? Will not then Self-love find Reasons for dispensing with the Duties of Penance and Fasting? Will not Pride be Ingenious in legitimating all the Methods of the World? Will not Interest have Contrivances for palliating Frauds? The most Essential Duties will all be disputed, either as unseasonable or inconsistent with the necessary Provision for Health or Subsistence. And so it too often is in practice, where there is not a good Foundation of Sincerity and Courage to make a true discovery of these Snares, and to raise the Soul above these weak Compliances. Wherefore, O God, I beseech thee, to grant to all Christians a true Sense both of their Duty and their own Weakness, that having here many Obligations upon them, they may not be deluded with the plausible Arguments of their own False Reasoning, or a Treacherous World; but take thy Will for their Law, and have such a Confidence in thee, as to venture all Inconveniences

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cies here, rather than dispence with what thou hast Commanded. Let the Light of Heaven shew them their Way in all Duties, and thy Grace give them Strength to go thro' it, till they come to find thee the Reward both of their Sincerity and their Courage, in despising all for thee.

Octave of Epiphany.

BEing now on the *Octave* of that Festival, which is not only kept in Memory of Christ, being acknowledg'd and ador'd by the Three Kings, but likewise in remembrance of Christ being Baptized in *Jordan* by St. *John*, we cannot have a more proper Subject for this Day's Entertainment, than to Treat of the Sacrament of Baptism, and looking thro' every part of it, there see, how great is the Mercy of God to us, and how great our Obligation to him.

We receive an unhappy Inheritance from our First Parents, who offending God by their Disobedience, not only lost that Original Justice, in which they were mercifully Created by God, but likewise, as Poyson'd Fountains infecting all their Streams,

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Streams, communicated the Guilt they had contracted, to all their Children, that were to descend from them. *By one Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death pass'd upon all Men, in whom all have sinned, Rom. 5. 12.* Under this Guilt then we are all Born, coming into the World defil'd with Sin, and the Children of Wrath, and therefore under the necessity of a powerful Remedy, for removing this Obstacle of Salvation, and making us capable of seeing the Face of God, to whom no Soul can have Admittance, that is polluted with Sin. *Revel. 21. 27.*

This Remedy Christ has mercifully provided for us in the Sacrament of Baptism, by which, the Virtue of his Sacred Passion is so effectually applied to the Souls of those, who are Baptized, that they are not only freed from Original Sin, and from the Guilt of all other Sins, which by their own Fault they may have Contracted, but likewise by the Grace, which they receive, are made the Children of God, entitled to the Inheritance of Eternal Life, incorporated into Christ, and fitted for all the Duties of Christian Piety, which belong to the Members of such a Head. Receiving at the same time a Spiritual Character,

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Character, by which their Souls are distinguished from Unbelievers, and being not subject to the power of Sin or Hell, can never be effaced: but will ever remain, to the Glory of the Just, and to the Eternal Confusion of those, who having been Adopted the Children of God, have afterwards transgress'd the Covenant made with him at the Font, and abus'd all those Graces, by which the Divine Mercy had prepar'd them for an Inheritance of Bliss.

This is the Effect of God's Infinite Goodness to us, who are Born his Enemies, and shews, how sincere his desire is, that none should perish, while he has thus prepar'd such Help to meet us at our Birth, and so effectual, as to give us a New Life, when we are not capable of concurring to it in the least part of our selves. And tho' this depends on the performing of an outward Ceremony, yet he has order'd it in so plain a manner, that Natural Water, with which it is to be perform'd, can never be wanting, nor Persons, who are to perform it, since it is not so tied to the Ecclesiastical Function, but that any Lay Persons, who are present, may be the Ministers of it, if the Danger be such, as to require it.

This

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This Mercy of God in such a timely provision of a Remedy against Eternal Evils, is an Instruction to Parents, of the Care they ought to have in the timely Administration of it, and that upon no Consideration, either in Compliment to Godfathers, or of preparing Entertainments, they are to admit of long delays in Baptizing their Children; for that it is not consistent with Parents Love, upon such petty Considerations, to hazard the Eternal Welfare of their Children, in giving Death an opportunity of snatching them away, while as yet under the Displeasure of God, and not having any part in the Merits of their Redeemer. It is an Instruction likewise to Midwives, and such Nurses, as are generally present at the Birth of Children, that, upon undertaking this Employment, they be carefully inform'd of the manner, in which this Sacrament is to be duly Administred; for that many Children being Born so very weak, as not to give time for others to be sent for, they must necessarily Die without Baptism, if these are not so well skill'd as to perform this Charity.

But now to have a full view of the Instructions belonging to this Sacrament, whether from the Effects, it works in us, or from the many Duties, in which

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it engages us, we cannot do better than consider the Ceremonies, with which it is Solemnly perform'd; for tho' these, to such, as know not what they mean, like a Language not understood, are more likely to raise Wonder or Laughter, than make better Impressions; yet to those, who from God's Sacred Word and Antiquity, learn what they signifie, they are like so many Holy Lessons, informing them either of the Unhappiness of Sin, or of the Effects of Grace, or of their Obligations, who, by Baptism, are incorporated into the Body of Christ.

First then, the Child is presented at the Church Porch, or in some Place answerable to it, at some distance from the Font, to signifie, that as yet, while under the guilt of Original Sin, he is an Enemy of God, a Stranger to his Family, and unworthy to enter into his House, till he be deliver'd from that Unhappy State, and receiv'd amongst the Children of Christ.

2dly, The Priest Breathes upon the Child, which signifies the approach of the Holy Spirit, who is about to take Possession of the Infant, and by Baptism to Communicate to him a New Life, even the Life of Grace. This was a Ceremony us'd by Christ, when communi-
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cating to his Apostles the Holy Ghost, He Breath'd on them, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

3dly, The Sign of the Cross is made on the Forehead and Breast of the Infant, to signifie, that he cannot be deliver'd from Sin, and made the Child of God, but by Virtue of Christ's Passion; that he is not to be asham'd of Christ Crucified, but desire, love, and seek Rest in him.

4thly, The Priest lays his Hand on the Head of the Child, to signifie the Power he has from Jesus Christ of Consecrating him a Holy Victim to God; and to follow the Example of Christ, who laid his Hand on many of those, whom he deliver'd from their Infirmities.

5thly, Salt is put into the Mouth of the Child, to signifie, that by the Grace receiv'd in Baptism, his Soul is freed from the Corruption of Sin, is to relish the most difficult Lessons of the Gospel, and that all his Works and Words, ought to be season'd with Christian Prudence, of which Salt is the Emblem, that so they may be ever agreeable to Jesus Christ.

6thly, Exorcisms are us'd, to oppose the Power of God, against the Power of the Devil, and by the same Divine Power

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Power to dispossess him of whatever Power he has in the Child by Sin.

7thly, The Priest again makes the Sign of the Cross on the Child's Forehead, and lays his Hand on his Head, to shew, that he is chosen out to become a Victim, Dedicated to the Service and Honour of God.

8thly, The Priest lays the end of his Stole on the Child, and brings him into the Church; or to the Font, to signifie the Priestly Power, by which, in the Administration of this Sacrament, the Child is to be admitted into the number of the Faithful, and have a part in Christ.

9thly, The Creed is said by the Priest, and by the Godfather and Godmother, in the Name of the Child, to signifie, that no Good can be expected, nor New Life given to the Child, but by a Faith in Christ.

10thly, The Priest touches the Ears of the Child with Spittle, saying, *Ephpheta, Be thou open'd*; and then the Nostrils. This is in imitation of what Christ did, in Curing the Dumb and the Blind mention'd in the Gospel, *Mar. 7. 34.* and signifies, that the Child, by Baptism, being admitted into the Fold of Christ, ought to hear his Voice, and not that of the World; that he ought to seek no other

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other Perfumes, but of the Knowledge and Life of Christ.

These are the Ceremonies Preparatory to Baptism, and therefore go before it; there are others, which accompany it, and are us'd at the Font, where the Sacrament is administred.

First, The Child is ask'd, if he renounces Satan, his Poms, and his Works: And the Godfather, in the Name of the Child, answers; *Abrenuncio*: I renounce them. This is done, because the Infant cannot become the Child of God, if he does not renounce all part in the Devil, and all that belongs to him. And since the Child at the Font, by his Godfather, makes a Solemn Engagement, of which God and his Angels are Witness, to renounce the Devil, his Poms, and Works, when he comes to the Age of Reason, he ought to Ratifie this Promise, and remember, that it is his Duty, all his Life, to keep it. For what has a Christian to do with the Poms and Works of the Devil, which he has renounc'd?

Secondly, The Child is Anointed with Holy Oyl on the Breast and Shoulders, in the Form of a Cross, to signifie, that he is now to become a Part of Christ, who is call'd *Anointed*; that he is Consecrated to God, which was ever done by Anointing.

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ing. That whatever he Does, Desires or Suffers, (signified by the Breast and Shoulders) ought to be Sanctified to Christ Crucified.

Thirdly, Being ask'd, *If he Believes*; and the Godfather answering in his Name, *Credo, I Believe*, to shew, that whatever belongs to Religion ought be done by a Free Choice, and not by Force, the Child is then Baptized. And in this Action being the Administration of the Sacrament, it is here Grace and New Life is Communicated to the Child, and the Godfather and Godmother Contract an Affinity with the Child, and with his Parents, such as is an Impediment of Marriage with any of them for the time to come.

Other Ceremonies follow Baptism First, The Child is Anointed on the Head with Chrism, to signifie, that he is become a Member of Christ, and that Christ is now his Head.

Secondly, The Chrism, or White Cloth, is put upon the Child, to signifie the present Purity of his Soul, and that his Life ought to be so Exemplar, as to carry that Robe Unspotted to the Tribunal of Christ.

Thirdly, A Lighted Candle is put into the Hand of the Child, or of the Godfather, to signifie, that his Life ought to be

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be such, that his Light may shine before Men, that they see his good Works, and glorifie his Father, who is in Heaven.

Lastly, His Name is Register'd, not only for his future Assurance of having been Baptized, but likewise to signifie, that he is Listed in the Christian Warfare, that his Name is writ in the Book of Life, and that it ought to be his perpetual Care, not to blot it out by Sin.

These are the Ceremonies us'd in Baptism ; some of them have their Authority from Scripture, and all of them from the Practice of the Primitive Church, being all expressly mention'd and expounded in the Authentic Writings of *S. Ambrose* and *S. Augustin* ; and however strange to the Ignorant, yet contain great Instructions, both as to the Effects of this Sacrament, and the Obligations of as many as are Baptized.

Besides these, nothing more can be here expected ; I add however a Caution or two belonging to this Subject ; First, As to the Name given in Baptism ; that it ought to be a Christian Name. Hence a Prophane, Fabulous or Ridiculous Name is not to be allow'd ; and as for Complimenting any Family, by giving their Surname in Baptism, it does not answer the Design of the Church, and therefore

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is not to be admitted. Giving many Names in Baptism is not forbid, but it not being so Conformable to the use of the Church, and seeming to be design'd to satisfy the Vanity of Great Ones, I think it is not to be encourag'd.

Secondly, As to the Godfather and Godmother, that their Obligation is to see, the Children, for whom they answer, be duly instructed in the Principles of Faith and Good Life: This is what they Solemnly undertake, and they must discharge this Obligation, if the Parents neglect it. Hence such ought to be chosen, as are qualified for satisfying this Duty: If they are not Sound and Right in Faith; if they are Ignorant; if they are of an ill Life; if they are Children, they cannot be judg'd qualified for it, and therefore such as these are not to be admitted.

Thirdly, As to the Child, that it ought not to be laid in the Bed with the Mother or Nurse for the first Year at least, because of the danger of being Over-laid. This Charge is given by the Church in all her Rituals, as a Common Mother of as many as are Baptized; and in some Dioceses it is forbid under the Penalty of Excommunication.

I add no more, but my Address to all
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now grown up, that they would remember, by how Holy a Mystery they were admitted into the Number of God's Children; what were the Promises they then made, and how great is their Obligation of performing what they then Promis'd. That they would consider, how great is the Crime of living in the breach of a Covenant made with God; and whether to be thus Unfaithful, is the Part of Children, or can give Hopes of a Reward. O God, awaken all those, who have been cleans'd by the Laver of Regeneration, that they may be sensible of their Duty, and renounce all their Lives, what they renounc'd at the Font.

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

HAVING finish'd the Mysteries belonging to the Birth of our Redeemer, and in the Adoration of the Three Kings from the *East*, seen him manifested to the *Gentiles*, we must now consider, what are the principal Obligations belonging to those, who acknowledge him for their Savior and their God.

The first of these is Faith; to be a Disciple therefore of Christ, it is not only necessary

necessary to Believe One God and Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that the Second Person became Man for our Salvation; but likewise there must be a Faith of whatever Doctrines Christ has taught; the Reason is; because whoever confesses Christ, must own him to be the Truth, the Way, and the Life; if he be the Truth, he is to be believ'd; if he be the Way, he is to be follow'd; if he be the Life, then Life is not to be obtain'd but by Him, that is, by seeking both the Truth, and Way, that leads to Life, from him. And therefore there can be no Denying or Doubting of what he teaches, but by denying him; there can be no Neglect in Enquiring after what he has taught, but with Prejudice to the Christian Faith, which believing his Truth to be the Way, cannot allow of an Indifferency in knowing what he teaches, but sets upon this the infamous Mark of Contemning him.

The Spirit then of a Christian, as to Faith, is a Spirit of Submission, in obliging both the Imagination, the Judgment and Reason, to Assent to whatever he teaches as Certain and Infallible Truths, and will not allow of any Disputing or Doubting, tho' the Points taught by him be so little proportion'd to our Reason, that

that this cannot reach or comprehend them. Fortho' the Doctrines in themselves are thus Incomprehensible, yet the Faith of them is still Reasonable ; because, as Reason apprehends God to be infinitely above Man, so it must apprehend his Truths to be infinitely above the Reason of Man ; and thus Reason it self, upon its own Natural Principles, removes all that Surprise, which is rais'd by its own Weakness, and cannot Wonder at any Darkness, which Accompanies the Divine Truths, since knowing them to be Truths belonging to God, it sees a Necessity of this Darkness attending them, for that otherwise they could not be the Truths of God.

Reason likewise apprehends, that the Truths of God are to be taught by God ; and that being taught by him, it is reasonable, that Man should receive and believe them ; because it is according to the Principles of Natural Reason, that Man should be subject to God, and consequently, that no Objections occasion'd by Man's Weakness, should be an Exception against what God teaches ; because such Objections reflect only upon Man, and not upon God ; being a proof of the Narrowness of Human Reason, but not bringing God's Truth into Question, but
only

only where the Presumption of Man attempting to know God, is punish'd with the Blindness of not knowing himself.

These Truths then, which are the Subject of Christian Mysteries, being so much superior to Reason, as to be ever attended with a certain Obscurity, must be recommended to us by a Divine Authority, to become the Subject of our Faith; and where this Authority is not, they cannot be there assented to with a Divine Faith, but only with Opinion, since whatever is receiv'd upon a less Authority than that of God, cannot be with Christian Faith, which is a Belief of God, and not subject to Error.

This Authority of God appear'd in the first Publishing of the Christian Mysteries; because Christ, by evident Miracles, prov'd his Mission from God, and therefore they were then to be receiv'd with a Divine Faith. The same Authority accompanied them, when they were taught throughout the World by the Apostles; because these were commanded by Christ to go and teach his Truths, and had the Promise of his Holy Spirit to secure them in teaching the Truth. Thus they being Commission'd from Heaven, and invested with a Divine Authority, were qualified for being the Publishers of God's Truths;

and this Authority being manifested to the World by the Miracles wrought by them, hence the whole World was oblig'd to receive what they taught and believe, under no less a Penalty, than of Damnation: *He that believes not shall be damn'd,* Mark 16. 16.

The same Authority was in the Church succeeding the Apostles in all Ages; because the Words of Christ, authoriz'd by so many Miracles, have given a certain Testimony of the Perpetuity of his Church, and of its being assisted by the Holy Spirit, and to be led by it into all Truth, even to the end of the World. And the Miracles wrought by the Apostles were not only convincing Proofs of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, who had foretold them, and in whose Name they were done; but likewise of the Authority of the Church, in which they were done.

In this may be conceived a true Idea of Christ's Church; that it is a Visible Authority, establish'd by Christ, begun in his Apostles, and to be continued on to the end of the World; that the end, for which it was instituted, was to teach the Doctrine of Christ to all Nations, and in all Ages, to distinguish Christ's Truths from Errors, and condemn those, who should

should endeavor to deceive the Flock. That to answer these Purposes, for which it was ordain'd by Christ, it was duly qualified by Christ; the Spirit of God being to watch over it, to reach it, and lead it into all Truth. Thus the Church being vested with the Authority of God, it is on this Authority all the Faithful rest, as to the Truth of whatever Doctrine they hear from the Church. Christ has commanded them to hear it, has promis'd it shall teach Truth, and therefore commanded them to believe it; and therefore they do believe it, knowing God to be Faithful to his Promises, and that tho' Heaven and Earth pass away, yet his Word shall never pass away. Upon this Authority they build their Faith, and therefore their Faith is Divine.

Christian Faith being the Belief of Divine Mysteries, upon Divine Authority, Christians have a right Faith, when they believe according as they are taught by a Divine Authority. Christ had this Authority, the Apostles had this Authority, the Church of Christ has this Authority; and therefore those, who heard and believ'd what Christ taught; those, who heard and believ'd what the Apostles taught; those, who have heard and believ'd, and do now hear and believe what

the Church of Christ teaches, have all believ'd, and do now believe with a Right and Sound Faith; because Christ gave to his Apostles, and to his Church, a Divine Authority, sufficient for the grounding of a Sound and Christian Faith in all that believe them.

Those, who follow any other Rule or Method in believing, have not sufficient Authority for grounding a Christian Faith; and whatever they believe, they do not believe it, as Christians ought to do. First, those, who believe according to their own Private Interpretations of Holy Scripture, or according to the Interpretations of any Particular Church or Congregation; because, tho' the Scripture be of Divine Authority, yet no Private Interpretations of it, have such an Authority; and therefore those, who regulate their Faith by such Interpretations, cannot have a Christian Faith; that is, a Faith built on the Authority of God. When the Church of Christ expounds and delivers the Sense of Holy Scripture, such Expositions carry with them a Divine Authority, because Christ commands the Church to be heard, and has solemnly engag'd his Word, that it shall teach Truth, and therefore may be believ'd with a Divine Faith. But when Private Persons, or
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Particular Churches expound the Scriptures, such Expositions have no more Authority than those give them, who so expound them; for there being no Private Person, or Particular Congregation, that can claim any Promise from Christ of an absolute Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, for preserving them from Error in expounding the Scripture, the Authority of their Expositions cannot be Divine, but is subject to Mistake, and can have no more Certainty in them, than in being according to the best of their Judgment; and how can this be sufficient Ground for Christian Faith? This cannot be, especially since all Private Churches own themselves Fallible; and there being no Particular Exposition given by them, but what is differently given by others, as Learned, as Pious, as Sincere, and of as much Authority as they, the assenting to any such Exposition, can be no more than Opinion, and not Christian Faith. And the full Import of such an Assent is no more than this; That whilst Scripture is differently Expounded, this seems to me the best Exposition of it, and so I believe; and what is this more than Opinion? So that while the Scripture is of Divine Authority, the Exposition is no more than a Probability.

2dly, Those, who believe according to Private Instincts of the Spirit moving within them, and bearing Testimony of the Truth, do not believe with a Christian Faith. Because, tho' the Testimony of the Holy Spirit be a sufficient Ground of Faith; yet there being no general Certainty in distinguishing the Motions of the Holy Spirit, from other Motions, which press with an equal Violence, and yet are wholly Visionary; there is not that general Certainty in this Way, which is necessary for Christian Faith. 2dly, Because the Method of Believing prescrib'd by Christ and his Apostles, was such, as was to unite all the World in one Faith, by obliging all to hear and believe the Visible Authority of his Church. Thus the Faith of all was directed by the Preaching of the Apostles; and when any Difficulty arose, as *Acts* 15. it was not left to the Decision of an Inward Testimony only, but was determin'd by the Apostles, and their Decrees were deliver'd to the Faithful. This was the Institution of Christ, the Practice of the Apostles, and of the Church, in the time of its confess'd Purity; and thus all were united both in Faith, and the External Society of one Body, by a common Submission to one Visible Authority, esta-

establish'd by Christ, and qualified for this Intent by him. Now this Unity must necessarily be broken, if all were left to Internal Motions, since every one sanctifying their own differing Imaginations under this Color, they must all be allow'd, without any Means left for over-ruling them; because there can be no Argument against that, which is suppos'd and embraced as the certain Motion of the Holy Ghost. So that while all cry out, the Spirit, the Spirit, tho' it be not the Spirit, yet all will adhere to it with the same Stiffness, as if it really were; and what Possibility then of reconciling any Difference in Belief, or of Uniting in Faith?

The Method then of believing aright, being that which was ordain'd by Christ, of hearing him teaching by his Church; this being the Method, by which the World became Christian, and alone secur'd from Error; lead, I beseech thee, O God, all People to thy Church; that Church, which the Creed obliges all to believe; that they may not be deluded by their own Reas'ning, nor carried away by the uncertain Glosses of Human Learning, but receive thy Truths from thy Holy Spirit, and there seek thy Spirit, where thou hast promis'd it shall be found.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

THE Church of Christ being ordain'd by Christ, for teaching the whole World his Truths, and qualified for this End, by the promis'd Assistance of his Holy Spirit, all those, who know how to confide in God, may with Security hear and believe his Church, because God commands them to believe it; and having promis'd, that it shall teach Truth to the end of the World, they cannot except against what she teaches, but by distrusting in God, and questioning his Truth. Upon this Consideration duly weigh'd, there can never be any just Reason for questioning the Doctrine of the Church, or for separating from its Communion.

First then, if Persons, upon reading the Holy Scripture, and comparing the Doctrine of the Church, with the Sacred Text, seem fully perswaded, that it is not agreeable to what is there deliver'd; yet this cannot be sufficient Motive for departing from the Church, or excepting against its Doctrine; because Christ gives an absolute Command to all, of Hearing and Believing his Church, and does not subject the Examen of its Doctrine to those who are to receive it. He requires a

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Submission from them, and will have this Submission grounded on the Authority, which he has establish'd, that is, on Himself; and leaves it not to the Uncertainty of their own Apprehension, which being subject to great Mistakes in the most ordinary Matters, is not capable of pronouncing with any kind of Certainty, in the Point of Divine Truths, which are above the reach of the strongest Reason, and therefore are not the Objects of Reason, but of Faith. 'Tis easie to be observ'd, how different are the Sentiments of the most Learned, when they dispute Matters of Faith, and how many Texts are cited by each Party, in favor of their disagreeing Doctrines. Now, if these, who have Learning to help their Reason, and compare Texts with much greater Advantage than others can do, cannot so clear any one Point, as to oblige others to close with them; how necessarily must all be brought to Confusion, if every Private Believer is left to the Determination of his own Judgment, and has the Liberty of rejecting the Doctrin of the Church, if he finds it not agreeable to his own Exposition of Holy Writ?

Christ, who design'd to unite all in one Faith, did not leave things to this Uncer-

tain Issue; he propos'd Divine Truths to be believ'd, which are above Reason, and requiring the World, both Learned and Unlearned, to be united in the Belief of them, did not leave them to be disputed by Reason, but to be receiv'd by all with an equal and humble Faith. This Union could not possibly be effected, but by a Submission of Reason to some Authority, which should over-rule all the different Sentiments, to which Private Judgments, thro' the Difference of Education and Capacity, are unavoidably subject: This Authority could not be less than Divine, because all that is Human was to yield to it. Divine Authority was Originally in himself, and it was the Effect of his Infinite Goodness to communicate this to his Apostles, and to his Church, that by a Submission to this, all might be deliver'd from the Uncertainty of their own Private Reason, and rest upon a sure Foundation; such as would afford Security to all that could trust in God, and could not be expos'd to the Exceptions of Human Wit or Learning. Those therefore, who receive not the Doctrines of the Church, but only as far they judge them conform to the Holy Scripture, and depart from all others, which they cannot approve, invert the Establish'd Order of
Christ,

Christ, in setting themselves up Judges of his Church, instead of submitting to it, and rendring a Union in Faith impossible in their Way, open a Gate to the Confusion of endless Differences.

What then are those Christians to do, who, upon reading the Scripture, think the Doctrines of the Church not agreeable to it? If they have any Sense of their own Weakness, and of God's Truth, they will rather suspect themselves, than that Authority, which God has commanded them to hear, and promis'd, that it shall be led into all Truth by his Holy Spirit: And it can never be reasonable on such Thoughts, to forsake or censure the Church; because it cannot be reasonable for Christians to have more Confidence in their own Sense, than in the Promises and Truth of God.

But if they have the Authority of a Learned and Christian Church, which approves and teaches what they judge most reasonable to believe, this cannot be esteem'd a Confidence in their own Thoughts. If it be not a Confidence in their own Thoughts, it is a Confidence, at least, in Man more than in God, which is still as unreasonable. For if Christians are to depend on the Authority of any Church, Reason must direct them to depend

pend on that Church, which Christ ordain'd and commanded all to hear, securing it in Truth by the promis'd Assistance of his Holy Spirit; and those, who depend on any other in Preference to this, confide more in Man than in God. And if upon a better Review of themselves, they find, that their Choice of a Church, has been by considering, which comes nearest to their own Thoughts, then they have Reason to fear, that their Confidence is in their own Sense, and that, upon this, disowning the Church of God, they trust more in themselves than in God. The Christian's Part is to make use of the best of his Industry and Reason, in examining, which amongst all Churches, that profess Christ, is the True Primitive Church of Christ; and having found it, immediately to hear and believe its Doctrine, upon the Confidence of God's Goodness, who commanded all to believe it, and of his Truth, who promis'd it should reach Truth to the end of the World. But, as for those, who first model their Faith by their own Sense of Scripture, and then approve that Church, which approves them, this is not to believe a Church, but themselves.

But if they believe and follow a Church, which they think to be the Church of Christ,

Christ, this is what all do, because all that are Sincere, believe their own Church to be the Right; and since every disagreeing Church or Congregation cannot be that One, which was instituted by Christ, this is not enough, and they may still be far from the Truth. What then is to be done, amidst the present Diversity of Churches, and all pretending to be the Right? The common Business of all Christians is to seek that One Church amongst them all, which is the Right; and it must be that Church only, which Christ ordain'd; because no Church has Power to Teach, nor sufficient Authority to be Believ'd, but from the Power and Authority, which Christ gave; and since he gave this to no other, but to that One, which he ordain'd, there is not, nor can be, any other besides that One, which has Power to Teach, or sufficient Authority to be Believ'd; and whoever believes any other, cannot justify his Faith, neither does he believe on the Authority of Christ.

But how is this One to be found & distinguish'd from all others? Here is the Point on which all depends; for if this be found, then, upon Christ's Authority and express Command, there is Security in believing it: And the Task here is not so great in finding

finding Satisfaction, as that which Christians generally undertake, by involving themselves in the Discussion of Infinite Particular Points, in which nothing can be so positively determin'd either from Scripture or Reason, but there is still Place left for endless Disputes and Doubts. But how can Satisfaction be had in this one Point? It seems Obvious enough to common Reason, without the Help of much Learning. For if no Church has Power to Teach, or Authority to be Believed, but that One, to which Christ gave it, there is no Church, in this present Age, can have this Power and Authority, but as it is deriv'd and convey'd down to it from that Church, which Christ instituted, and was planted by the Apostles; this cannot be convey'd down, but by an uninterrupted Succession of Pastors and Believers: Therefore that Church alone can at present have this Power and Authority, given by Christ, which has had this Succession from the Apostles; and in all others, whatever they be, their Power and Authority can be no better than Usurpation, and those, who believe them, must be deceiv'd. This brings the Point very near a Resolution, because amongst all the Christian Churches, which say, they are the Church of Christ, there is
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but One, that can prove such a Succession of Pastors, and Faithful from the time of the Apostles; and all others either do not pretend to it, or only in such a way, as is not Consistent with the Nature and Institution of Christ's Church.

And this will be more fully clear'd, if we add one Consideration more to this, and that is, that no Congregation of Christians can at present have the Power to Teach, and sufficient Authority to be Believ'd, given by Christ to his Church, who disown or make void this Power and Authority for many Ages in the Church Antecedent to them, and from which they are deriv'd. And yet this is what all do, except One; as 'tis evident, in all undertaking to prove the Necessity of leaving the Antient Church, because the Church Antecedent to them, was Corrupted with Idolatry, and Taught Errors for many Ages. If this be true, then that Church had not the Power and Authority given by Christ to his Church, by which it was qualified for teaching the Truth: If that had it not, how should they have it, who descend from it, and have no Claim to that Power, but in Virtue of their Succession to it? By this Way, do all Christian Congregations, except One, make void the Commission
given

given by Christ to his Church, of Teaching the Truth, and this for many Ages. And do not they in this condemn themselves by their own Mouths, in pretending to Inherit that Authority, and require a Submission to what they teach; and yet can have no such Authority, but by succeeding that Church, in which they will not own the Qualifications given by Christ for Teaching, but condemn it as Idolatrous? Is not this the same Incongruity in Church, as it would be in Law; for a Man to pretend a Title to an Estate, and at the same time, to take Pains in proving that Person to have had no Right to it, by whom alone the Title could possibly come to him? There being therefore but One Church at present, which acknowledges Christ to have given to the Church Establish'd by him, a Command to Teach the whole World, and qualified it for Teaching the Truth by the Assistance of his Holy Spirit; that this Power of Teaching, and Authority to be Believ'd, has been convey'd down by a Continual Succession of the same Church in its Pastors and Flock in all Ages, that no Church at present can Claim such Power and Authority, but in Virtue of such a Succession, and that thus only she Claims it, as receiv'd from Christ, there is no other but that
One,

One, can be the True Church of Christ.

But if it be evident, that this One Church thus Claiming this Title, has made New Articles of Faith, and that it is upon Record when they were first enacted; as may be shew'd from its own Councils, how can these Innovations be Consistent with its Pretext of being the Primitive Church, and Teaching what it receiv'd from the Apostles? This Objection rightly Stated, proves the Church's Title instead of weakening it: For the Church, founded by Christ, being to teach the Truth, was, in Virtue of this Commission, oblig'd to make Opposition against whatever Errors should at any time appear, and make a Declaration to the World of the Truth receiv'd, that by this Means the Flock might distinguish it from Error, and holding fast the One, might not be in danger of being deluded by the other. This Practice was Authoriz'd by the Apostles in their Days, when a Dispute arising, mention'd *Acts. 15.* the Pastors assembling, who had the Charge of the Flock, determin'd what was to be observ'd by the Faithful, to whom their Decrees were every where publish'd. The same was done, upon like Occasions, in succeeding Ages, even in the time of the confess'd Purity of the Church, by the

the Council of *Nise*, of *Constantinople*, of *Ephesus*, of *Chalcedon*, when False Teachers disturbing the Peace of the Flock with New Doctrines, the Pastors assembled examin'd such Doctrines, and by composing Professions of Faith directly levell'd against them, manifested to the Faithful what they were oblig'd to hold fast as the Faith of the Church, and thus by Interposing their Authority, were ever careful to deliver them from the uncertainty of their own Private Decisions, to which they had been otherwise expos'd. This the Pastors of the Church were oblig'd to, for otherwise they had not satisfi'd the Charge given them by Christ, of Feeding and taking Heed of the Flock; but had been as Hirelings, in leaving the Flock to the Rapine of Wolves. To say therefore and prove, that there has been New Professions and Decisions of Matters of Faith, is not to unchurch the Church, but to produce so many Instances of its having done, as the true Church of Christ was oblig'd to do, for to answer the Charge left it by Christ; and does not prove any Innovation in Faith, but only New Declarations of the Faith receiv'd, which were then absolutely necessary for the condemning of Errors then broach'd, and could not be Conniv'd at, but with Prejudice to the Faithful.

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And if a Scandal be laid upon such Professions, as Innovations in Faith; let it but be consider'd; that such Professions were compos'd by the Pastors of the Church then in being, and therefore were the Authentic Act of the Church; that they were the Best Witnesses of the Faith they had receiv'd from their Predecessors; that they were best qualified for determining, how far any Doctrin was contrary to this Faith; that their Salvation was engag'd in the Truth of such Determinations; that being of different Nations, they could not likely be overrul'd by any Temporal Power; that if some Pastors were Vicious, it cannot be suppos'd, that the greater Part were of such Profligate Principles, as to impose their own Inventions on the World, instead of the Faith they had receiv'd; let these Heads be consider'd, and, abstracting from a Divine Assistance, it cannot bear a better Face than of a Rash Attempt, for Men, to Charge these Professions with Innovation, who not coming into the World, till Four, Six, or Eight Hundred Years after, undertake at that distance to have a Re-hearing of the Cause, and pronounce, what was the Faith such Ancient Pastors had receiv'd from their Predecessors, and what were the Additions,

ons, they made to such Faith; as if, being Born in the Fifteenth Century, qualified a Man for being a better Witness of what pass'd Five Hundred Years before, than those who then liv'd, and whose proper Business it was to enquire into the Matter, and whose Salvation was concern'd in their Depositing of Truth.

Thus tho' Human Reason puts Objections against the Church, yet the same Reason, by the Influence of a more Impartial Light, solves them again, and gives Assurance, that depending on God Teaching and Expounding the Scriptures by his Church, is the best Security of Faith. Lead all, I beseech thee, O God, into thy Church.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

IT being manifest from the Words of Christ, and the Practice of the Apostles, as they stand Recorded in Holy Scripture, that the World was to receive the Christian Faith from the Church establish'd by Christ, and planted by the Apostles; that this Church was fully qualified for Teaching the Truth, and for Deciding such Debates, as should at any time arise amongst the Faithful, by the Promis'd Assistance of
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the Holy Ghost, by whom it was to be guided into all Truth, even to the end of the World ; that this Church is but One, as is declar'd in the Creeds, in which all the Faithful of Christ, ought to be United as in One Mystical Body, of which Christ is the Head, and the Holy Ghost the Spirit, which gives it Motion, Direction and Life, to answer all those Purposes, for which it was ordain'd ; and some Light having been now given, for distinguishing this One Church of Christ, from all others, which put in their Claim. There are still some Difficulties to be answer'd: As First,

How can that be the True Church of Christ, in which are so many Scandalous and Vicious Persons, not only amongst the Flock, but likewise amongst the Pastors and Prelates, who should be a Light to others ? I own, this gives great Scandal, and many Woes belong to them, by whom this Scandal comes ; but still this is no Argument against its being the True Church of Christ. Because it is in Heaven alone, all is Pure, and without Mixture ; but the Church Militant on Earth is made up of Good and Bad ; it is in this Many are Call'd, but Few are Chosen ; this

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is evident from many Passages and Parables mention'd in the Gospel; but having shew'd this at large in a whole Discourse upon the Gospel of the next Sunday, to that I refer the Reader, and only add here, that as it is certain, the *Jews* were, for their time, the Chosen People of God, and yet had many very Wicked amongst them, both Priests and People; and as the Church in the Apostles time, was the True Church of God, and yet had many subject to great Disorders, such as are mention'd and censur'd in the Epistles extant in Holy Writ; so the Church may be still the True Church of Christ, notwithstanding the many Scandalous Professors or Pastors, that are in its Communion.

2dly, How can a Person have a Confidence of God, by the Particular Assistance of his Holy Spirit, directing such a Church into all Truth, and securing it from Error, which he sees Corrupted with Infinite Errors, and Defil'd with many Abominations? Let but any one look over the List of Murthers, Massacres, Inhumanities, Barbarities, &c. Committed by the Members, and Headed by the Pastors of that Church; let but any one consider the
Cheats

Cheats of False Miracles, the Principles Destructive of all Morality, the Pride and Worldly Policy of its most Eminent Leaders, and even of the Court of its Admired Head; let him but examine the Corruptions of Interest and Vice Authoriz'd by those Societies, who call themselves Religious, and it cannot be so much as hoped, that such a Communion is priviledg'd with a Particular Assistance of God's Holy Spirit above all others, but rather, that it is forsaken by God, and given over to a Reprobate Sense. I confess again, here is enough in this to discourage, for a time, at least an Ordinary Seeker. But however the Objection does not come to the Point; because the Faith of the Church is not founded on the Life of its Pastors, but on the Truth of Christ, and of his Promise; whatever the Pastors do of Evil, is the Effect of their own Corruption; they must answer for it, and others ought to detest it; but the Truth and Authority deposited with them, come from Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and are Inviolable. If Christ had promis'd, that all the Pastors of his Church should be Saints, the Argument would be Demonstration against those mention'd; but

but since the Promise is only of the Church being the Ground and Pillar of Truth, this is not made void by the Wickedness of Particular Men; and whoever withdraws himself from this Authority, and refuses to believe on this pretext, Presumptuously Tacks a Condition to Christ's Command and Promise, such as was never added by him, and makes this Supposititious Condition, and not God's Word, the Rule of his Conduct.

This may be easily understood from the Consideration of the *Jewish Church*: 'Tis certain, this was much Inferior to the Church of Christ, as to the Foundation and Promises, on which it was built; and yet such was its Authority in Teaching, and the Obligation of the People in Hearing, that the greatest Crimes in its Pastors made neither void. This is evident from the express Words of Christ, *Mat. 23*, where owning the Scribes and Pharisees to sit in the Chair of *Moses*, and declaring their Crimes to be Abominable, in a Catalogue of many Woes pronounc'd against them, yet still requires the Jew to hear their Doctrine, and be directed by them: *All things whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: But do not*

according to their Works, v. 3. In which Words he plainly shews, who were the Persons, whom the Jews were oblig'd to hear; those, who sat on the Chair of Moses; this was the Authority God had establish'd amongst the Jews, and it being deriv'd by Inheritance from God, tho' it might be dishonor'd amongst Men by their Crimes, who succeeded to it, yet this did not lessen it in it self, nor exempt the People from their Obedience to it: They are still to be taught by them, tho' at the same time, their Works are such, as cannot be approv'd, much less imitated, without Sin.

Now let this but be applied to the Pastors of the Christian Church. None are to be heard, but those, who sit on the Chair of Jesus Christ; by this Succession they inherit that Authority, which Christ left to his Church, for the Conduct of the Faithful to the end of the World. Their Authority then is from Christ; and tho' their Works may be as Infamous, as those of the Pharisees, yet they are still to be heard; and to pretend an Exemption, upon the Account of their Unworthiness, is to rebel against the Ordinance of God; because God having commanded them

to Teach, and his Sacred Promise being Security to the World for their Teaching Truth, their Unworthiness may cast a Blemish on their Persons, but it does not evacuate the Promise of God, nor lessen their Authority, which is not from themselves, but from God.

What therefore the World is to hearken to, is the Faith of the Church; for so doing it has the Command of God, and the Word of Christ engag'd for their being taught the Truth: But while all have this Command and Rule for their Faith, they have no such Command of following the Works of the Pastors, but only with this Limitation, as far as they are Good and Conformable to the Commandments of God; and whenever they depart from these, all those, who are subject to them, in hearing from their Mouths what the Church teaches, are as much at Liberty, and are even bound, to detest their Works, as those, who own no Subjection to them. This is the express Command of Christ, above-mention'd, in regard of the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in the Chair of *Moses*; for tho' they were to be heard and believ'd, as to what they taught, yet it is added, *Do not according to their Works*, because

cause these were Evil. Hence, as to all the Instances above, of Massacres, Cheats, Immoral Principles, Covetousness, Abuses, Vices, &c. tho' they could be fully prov'd, as encourag'd, headed and practis'd, not only by Pastors and Religious, but even by Prelates, and by him, who is Supreme amongst them; yet no one of the Flock ought to follow or approve them, but is oblig'd to follow this Command of Christ, *Do not according to their Works.* In virtue of which Command, I do here declare, that as to all the Evil, that either has been, or is at present done by any Members, Religious, Pastors, Prelates of the Church, of which I am a Member; I am asham'd of it, I am scandalized at it, I protest against it, I detest it, and think it more abominable in them, than in any others; and do not question, if they obtain not Pardon by a Sincere Repentance, their Condemnation will be of all the greatest. So that while I desire to be Faithful in believing what the Church teaches, I desire likewise to be Faithful in the Abhorrence of whatever Practices are contrary to the Law and Will of God. And this being taught me by the Church as my Duty, such Practi-

ees cannot bring the Authority of the Church into question, but must be lamented as the Effects of Human Misery, and the more lamented by its Members, as they see these taken up by its Adversaries, to defame it with undiscerning Souls, and prevent their Submission, where God has commanded it for their own Good.

3dly. If the People are to be taught by the Pastors of the Church, and these teach unsafe Opinions, and such as are dangerous in Practice, will not the People be thus impos'd upon in their Faith, and led out of the Way? It is in the Church, as to this Point, as it was in the Synagogue; the People had then a Command of being taught by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and yet they were not by this oblig'd to embrace all the Traditions of the *Pharisees*; because all these were neither universally receiv'd, nor publish'd by the Authority of the Chair of *Moses*. If then any *Scribe* or *Pharisee* propos'd any thing besides the common Doctrin, Authoriz'd from *Moses's* Chair, all might safely reject it: So it is amongst Christians; the Church Authorizes no Truths, but what are receiv'd by the whole Church, and make a Part of its Faith;

Faith; and as for Particular Opinions, she gives no Authority to Pastors to teach them; and if they do teach them, all the Flock have the Authority of the Church to reject them. And for discerning these, there is no Difficulty, since there are so many Books, which give an Account of the Church's Faith; and if any be impos'd on by a Presuming Opiniator, they cannot want the Help of Sincere Pastors to undeceive them, by stating to them the Faith of the Church.

4th y. If there was so much Wickedness in the Church, and such Practices, as must necessarily make the Enemies of God blaspheme, was it not time it should be purg'd of all this Corruption? Did not they do well, who undertook this Work; and is not their Communion the safest? It may always seem commendable, to endeavor to root out Tares from the Corn, but 'tis not always adviseable: But if it be suppos'd adviseable, that the Church should be purg'd of its Corruptions; by whom was this Work to be undertaken? The Order of Disci-
 plin and Government requir'd, that to purge the whole Body of the Church, should be undertaken by the Authority of the

whole Body ; for that otherwise the Act could not be Authentic, and Government would be overthrown for the reforming Abuses ; which can never be allow'd, because for a Part to break the Order of Government of the Whole, is Rebellion, and lays it open to much greater Abuses, than can be the Pretext for undertaking it : This then could not be warrantable upon any Principle of Law or Religion.

But might not a Part undertake to correct the Abuses found within it self? Observing Disciplin it might ; and accordingly in all Nations, there has been often National Synods held for the Reformation of such Abuses ; but if this be undertaken, and carried on with the Contempt and Violation of that Disciplin, which it is oblig'd to maintain, as a Part of the Whole Body ; if it has no Regard to that Subordination, which essentially belongs to it, as it is a Part ; then it is plain, that the Mischiefs of such a Proceeding, in the Preach of Disciplin and Unity, is an Evil of far worse Consequence, than are the Abuses, which can possibly be retrench'd by it. And therefore this can be no more approv'd in the Church (where the Bond of Unity ought to be inviolable)

inviolable) than in a Civil Government, which cannot allow of any County or Province subject to it (in Supposition of the greatest Abuses) to undertake their Reformation, except it be with due Subordination to the Whole. For if it proceeds otherwise, it is evident, the Proceeding is not consistent with Government, it is not Legal, but Seditious. And if it should carry on things so far, as to call in Question the Supreme Legislative Power of the Nation, and presume to rescind and make void its Acts, who does not see, whatever just Occasion could be pretended, that this would be Violence and Rebellion? Let this be applied to the Church, which was constituted One Body by Christ, and whose Unity is therefore the Ordinance of Heaven; and then it may be easily resolv'd, whether it be Just for any Part of it, to undertake to retrench Abuses, without any Regard to Subordination and common Disciplin; and whether its Communion be safe, after it has rescinded the Acts, and condemn'd that Supreme Power, by which the whole Body was govern'd. For, whatever the Occasions be, it is certain, here is a Violation of that Bond of Unity, which God establish'd, and this

cannot be clear'd from a Contempt of him. I am sensible, what is the Plea of the Defendants; but let these reflect, how they will not allow this as Good, when taken up by others to justify a like Proceeding against them, and this may give them some Light, as to the Justice of their own Defence. This may be a Help to clear some of the Difficulties belonging to this Subject, which tho' many, yet in so great a Part owe all their Strength to Education, Prejudice and Interest, that I only beg of thee, O God, to grant to all Christians an Unbias'd Reason, and a Sincere Desire of Truth, and then I cannot question, but that Grace, which works them into this good Disposition, will shew them the Necessity of Hearing the Church, and lead them to that Church, which Christ has commanded them to hear.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

A Christian, who not only believes in Christ, but likewise believes all those Truths, which Christ teaches by his Church, cannot expect Salvation by

by this Faith alone: For besides Faith, it is necessary, that every one should have a firm Hope in God. This Hope is a Lively Expectation of Eternal Glory, with which the Heart of every Believer ought to be possess'd; and this Expectation ought to be grounded on the Merits of Christ, who is our Mediator with God, and on the Power and Fidelity of God, who has promis'd Heaven to such, as keep his Commandments, and Grace, whereby we are enabled to keep them.

Hope ought to be grounded on the Merits of Christ, because Christ has offer'd himself a Sacrifice for Propitiation to the Father, that thro' him we may have Access to the Throne of Mercy, and by the Infinit Value of his Passion obtain both Pardon of our Sins and Grace, whereby to be justified in the Sight of God. In this has every Christian a sufficient Motive of Hope, amidst all the Discouragements of Weakness and Sin; because, whatever his Sins be, if he fix his Eye upon his Redeemer, he must see by him a Price paid, sufficient to cancel all his Debts; so that he can never sit down and say, my Iniquity is greater than can be forgiven; because Christ offers him the

Virtue of his Passion, whereby to make his Peace with God. The same furnishes every Sinner with the Hopes of all that Grace, which may be necessary for overcoming that Weakness, which has been hitherto the Unhappy Occasion of his Sin. For tho' he sees nothing but Misery and Corruption within himself, which incline him to Despair, tho' he sees nothing but a general Unworthiness, such as cuts him off from the Hopes of those Favors, by which his Soul is to be confirm'd in Grace; yet if he but turns to his Redeemer, and there seriously weighs the Infinit Mercies of his Sacrifice; that it was offer'd, not for the Just only, but for Sinners; that Sinners have, thro' his Gift, a Right in it, that they may offer it to God, as their own; in this he may find such a Ground of Hope, as to expect all thro' Christ, when in himself he sees no Motives, but of Despair. Then, if he looks on God, and sees, how easie it is for his Infinit Power, to frame Vessels of Honor out of this Barren and Stubborn Clay, and has this Power accompanied with unlimited Goodness, which ever inclines him to Mercy; that he has a Promise from his Goodness, confirm'd by an Oath, in which it is impossible,

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as St. Paul says, *Heb. 6. 18.* for God to Lie, that he will have Mercy; the Christian has in this so strong a Foundation of Hope, that he can no otherwise admit of Distrust, but by doubting either of the Power or Fidelity of God.

That Christian then has true Hope, who amidst all the Arguments of Distrust, arising from his own Unworthiness and Weakness, and amidst all the most pressing Motives of Fear, occasion'd by a troublesome World, raises up his Heart to God, and from the Faith of his Power, of his Goodness and Fidelity, and of the Infinit Ransom paid in the Blood of Christ, rests with an entire Confidence in this, that God will either deliver or support him in the Evils he suffers, and not only grant him the Remission of all his Sins, but likewise so establish him by his Grace, that he shall, by his Help, be enabled to master his own Inward Corruption, overcome the World, and obtain Everlasting Life.

Thus the Christian's Hope is to be built on God, as his Faith ought to be; but, since God requires some Conditions on our Part, no Christian can have true Hope, who is not Solicitous to observe the Conditions, which God has
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annext to it. If therefore the Promises of God are examin'd, the Christian will find, he never has given his Word either for the Pardon of Sins, or Eternal Life, but upon our Repentance and Obedience to his Law. Whoever therefore seems to hope in God, and yet lives on in Sinful Disorders, without any Care for Amendment, or Solitude for doing the Will of God, 'tis certain his Hope is vain, and shall perish with that of the Hypocrite; because God has made no Promises of Mercy to such, but only upon the Condition of forsaking their evil Ways; and therefore no other way can their Hope be in God, but Judgment is to be their Expectation, and not Mercy.

The Condition then of Hope is to be observ'd; we are to expect Grace, and Mercy, and Salvation, from God, as he has promis'd it; and that is by seeking it by such Ways, as he has manifested to be acceptable to him; that is, by Prayer, Fasting, Alms, by Sighs and Tears, by Humiliations, by the Sacraments, by Self-denials, and continual Endeavors of Crucifying the Flesh, and putting on Christ. This then ought to be done, and yet in the doing them, tho' we are bound to be every

every way Careful and Industrious, as the Concern requires, yet our Confidence is not to be in our own Endeavors, we must not look for Success, as the Fruit of our Labors, but are wholly to depend on God, waiting for his Blessing, and confessing, that whatever we expect, must be the Effect of his Mercy and Goodness.

The same must be our Sentiments, when we have done all we are able; for tho' our daily Exercise be Prayer and Good Works, yet we are not to trust in our own Merits, but in the Excess of God's Goodness; because, when we have done all, we are unprofitable Servants; we know not, whether we are worthy of Love or Hatred; we cannot tell, but what we esteem Good, may be defil'd with many secret Corruptions; especially, since the Scripture teaches us, that all our Justice is, of it self, as a foul and defil'd Cloth. And if there be any thing good in what we do, yet this must be confess'd; not to be of our own Stock; since, of our selves, we are not able to think a good Thought; but to be the Effect of the Divine Grace; that if God Rewards what we do, 'tis only what is due to his own Gifts, and in virtue of the Promises

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mises of his own Infinit Mercy; and that all the Acceptance we can expect with him, is only thro' the Merits of his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, Blessed for ever more. Thus, while we labor, and daily endeavor to walk according to the Precepts of the Gospel, yet our Confidence is not to be in our selves, or what we do, but wholly in God; and whenever we begin to think our selves something, and to trust in what we do, our Hope is then not Christian, is not built on the Rock, but on the Sand, and can never come to the end of Hope, which is Salvation.

But while we hope in God, and have a firm Belief of him, being Faithful to all his Promises, yet still our Hope is accompanied with Fear; with a Fear, I say, arising from the Experience of our own Misery and Weakness; because having no Security of our present Corresponding with the Helps of God, nor any Certainty of what we shall do for the time to come; and so much Uncertainty in all the Judgments we make of our selves, in regard of our Inward State, so that we do but guess, even as to the most Essential Condition of Mercy, which is that of Repentance; we cannot but hence have our Hope, if
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not mixt, at least, attended with Fears; but this Fear being only the Distrust of our selves, does not at all lessen, but may very much encrease our Confidence in God. Because, as Danger makes us flee closer under their Shelter, who undertake to secure us; and as the greater our Weakness is, the more we rest on those, who give their Hand for our Support; so here the Knowledge of our own Misery, and the Evidence, that no Dependance is to be placed in our selves, may be a strong Motive, in obliging us to seek Shelter under the Wings of God, and to rest upon him with greater Confidence, from whom alone, we see, our Security must come: For as 'tis too evident an Experience, that a vain Opinion of our selves, and flattering Thoughts of our own Worth and Virtue draw us to our selves, and diminish our Confidence in God; so it is not less evident, that a Distrust of our selves may be a good Disposition for our approaching to God, and greater Dependance on him. And since St. Paul advises us to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling, I think it cannot be doubted, but as Hope is our Duty, so likewise is Fear; and

and that both are necessary in this our Imperfect State, to keep us in that Happy Mean, betwixt Presumption and Despair, which is the Way that must lead us to God.

But 'tis true too, that Fear, being Immoderate, may have its Mischiefs, and not be agreeable with Christian Hope, for if it arises to that Excess, as to oppress the Mind with Weight and Darkness, and discourage it from the Performance of those Exercises and Duties, which the Gospel prescribes as the Means of Grace, 'tis no longer then to be approv'd; since 'tis certain, it diminishes Hope, instead of being a Help to it, and, in that Excess, does not so much arise from a Consideration of Weakness, as from Pride and Impatience; whilst the Soul, not bearing the Conviction of its own Infirmary, sinks under a sullen Grief, and tir'd with the repeated Endeavors of Amendment, but all seemingly Fruitless, begins to fear all to be lost. This comes nearer Despair than Hope, and in it self is a very troublesome Evil, robbing the Soul of all Comfort, and laying it open to Infinit Delusions: But I hope, tho' the Danger of this unhappy State be always great, yet the Sin of it is not
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always so ; because it is not design'd by those, that suffer it, but is often the Effect of Constitution join'd with an ill-manag'd Solitude for doing well. These however may find Help, by daily Endeavors of improving in Humility, Patience and Hope, and by observing a strict Obedience to the Prescriptions of an experienc'd Director. This, I know, will be a great Contradiction to Nature, which is fond of its own Thoughts ; but however, since Self-denial is necessary for overcoming all Interior Disorders, 'tis what these must submit to, if ever they desire to have Peace. Be thou therefore, O God, the Director to these unhappy Souls, and let not their Indiscretions divert thy Grace from them. Give to all others a firm Hope in Thee, for we confess it to be thy Gift ; and convince them so entirely of thy Power and Goodness, that neither Temporal Evils, nor the Horror of Sin may obscure in them the Light of thy Mercy : Thus may they go on, ever waiting for thy Deliverance, and at length find their Hope to end in the Possession of Thee.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE Power and Mercy of God, and the Merits of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, are the Foundation and Support of our Hope; it is on these we must depend, for whatever Blessing we expect, either for Body or Soul, and we cannot fix our Expectation on any thing else, as Independant on God, but with Injury to that Faith and Hope, we ought to have in him. But however, while we hope in God, we are not to scruple the making use of Natural Causes, and such Human Means, as are proportion'd to the Effect we desire; nay, we are bound to do it; because God having appointed them for this end, we tempt God, if expecting help from him, we do not use such Means, as he has ordain'd for the obtaining it. Hence we are to eat for the Support of Life, consult the Physician for Health, the Lawyer for our Right, Plow for Corn, Labor for Money, &c. But still, good Christians, knowing, that all Natural Causes have their Virtue from God, and that Human Means, for their Success, depend on his Blessing; for that

that *Paul* may Plant, and *Apollo* may Water, but 'tis God must give the Encrease; therefore the first thing they consider, is, that the Means, they use, be lawful; that is, according to God's Ordinance or Permission: Hence for a Livelihood, they will not take such a Way, as Interferes with the Commandments, or the Creed, they will not Act against Justice or Conscience; for Health they will not use such Means, as can be suspected of Charms or Witchcraft, neither will they seek Deliverance from Charms by other Charms; because 'tis plain to common Reason, that such as dare not Trust their Livelihood or Health, in using such Means as God permits; but seek Help from Practices, which he forbids, 'tis plain, I say, that these place not their Confidence in God; but depart so far from him, as they depart from his Ways: And from whence must their success, in this Case, be expected? Can God be suppos'd to give a Blessing to what he forbids? Their Help then must be from him, whose Ways they follow; and all such Ways which have not their Authority from the known Will of God, being from the Devil, their Practice

Practice of them cannot be separated from a Dependence on him.

O God, if this be true, then how unhappy must be the State of that great Number of Christians, who, professing thy Name, depend not on Industry, and a Lawful Gain, but endeavor to Encrease their Stock by the daily Practices of Frauds, Injustices, Oppression, and Wronging their Neighbor, was not Warranted by the Law nor the Gospel, which they believe, but contrary to it ! These say to Thee ; *Give us this Day our daily Bread* ; but their Practices being contrary to thy Will, it is not from Thee they expect their Bread ; but from him, who is their Instructor, and teaches them to transgress thy Law. They are equally unhappy, who having thy Light to direct them in the Ways of thy Truth, but Apprehending them not agreeable to their Reputation or Interest, consult these by a Weak Compliance with what they know to be Unjust, and make Right yield to Convenience. These cannot have their Hope in Thee, who dare not Trust themselves with Thee ; but as far as they forsake thee for the World, so far they serve the World, and not Thee. And are not
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all they in the same List, who push'd on by a vain Curiosity, undertake by the Stars to enter into the Secrets of thy Counsels, or by Superstitious Observations, to have a Foresight of what is yet to come? These have not Confidence in thy Conduct, who dare not Trust the Orders of Providence; and what can they expect from thee, who by using Unlawful Means shew their Dependance not to be on Thee?

But Good Christians are not only to see, that what they do be Lawful; but, to satisfie the Obligations of Hope, they are likewise, in the use of the most Warrantable Means, to let their Principal Confidence be, not in their own Industry or Skill, or in the Art of those that help, or in the Virtue of Natural Causes, but in the Blessing of God, as expecting Success from him. Hence we cannot do better, in the beginning of all Business, and of every thing we do, whether for Health or Life, than to raise our Minds to God, Professing our Trust to be in him, and humbly beseeching him to give a Blessing to us; for that, as the Psalmist says; *Except God shall build the House, in vain do they Labor, who build it: Except our Lord guards the City, in vain do they Watch,*

Watch, who keep it : So we are to conclude ; that nothing can succeed with us, which is not the Fruit of God's Blessing; and that whatever seems to Thrive without it, is more to be fear'd than desir'd. Thus if we go on, in all Undertakings, and in every Business, with our Eyes ever upon our Lord, waiting for his Blessing both to begin and finish ; if we desire nothing more, than what is agreeable to God's Will, and whose growth is to be from the Dew of Heaven , we shall in this have proof, of our Hope being in God, and trusting in him shall not be founded.

And this is to be our Method in Spiritual Affairs, as well as Temporal ; so that while we endeavor strictly to follow the Ways of the Gospel, yet are we to remember, that the Grace of God is our Sanctification, and that therefore our Confidence is not to be in our selves, but in the favor of his Blessing. But however, we are to labor still, and may have Reason to be strengthen'd in Hope, according as we see our selves Industrious in such Exercises, as seem proper for moving God to Mercy ; because God commands us to seek, and upon this Condition Promises, that
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we shall find ; hence the more we seek, the more is the Hope of finding ; and this Hope is not in our selves, but in God, because it is a Hope depending on the Promises and Fidelity of God.

Hence it cannot be a Just Charge upon those, who Fast and Pray much, and Practice the Rigors of the Antient Hermits, that their Confidence of Salvation is not in the Merits of Christ, but in their own Works ; for tho' it is not to be doubted, but such a Life is subject to great Pride and Presumption, yet it must be own'd too, that this is only the Temptation, and not the Design of it ; and therefore whatever such Persons may yield thro' Weakness, which is known only to God, yet if Charity has an Influence on our Thoughts, we are bound to judge, that where is the Practice of greater Severity, there is the greater Desire of obtaining the Grace of God ; and if this be allow'd, as it must be, that they, who are most Industrious in seeking the Grace of God, are most Desirous of it ; then, I think, it cannot be denied, but they, who desire it most, confess their greatest want of it, and discover, above all others, their Judgment

ment to be, that they must necessarily be Miserable without it.

This I am certain, is what the Church suggests to all, as the immediate Motive for being Solicitous in seeking the Grace of God, because they can do nothing of themselves, as from themselves; and hence it is, that those, who are most pressing in obtaining the Divine Assistance, are the Persons, who are most fearful of themselves, and most sincerely convinc'd of their own nothing. This has been the Sentiment of the greatest Saints, who, upon the Knowledge of their own Misery, have for this Reason, omitted nothing they could apprehend Effectual for prevailing with God for shewing Mercy to them, and therefore have out-done all others in the Rigorous Disciplin of their Lives. This therefore is the Judgment, which ought to be fram'd of all others, who follow the same Method; and in framing this Judgment we are help'd by Reading the Holy Scriptures: For if we reflect upon the Children of *Israel*; when was it, that they offer'd greatest Violence to Heaven, and Solicited most earnestly for Divine Succors, by Prayer, Fasting, Sackcloth and Ashes? Was it not, when they were oppress'd
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by their Enemies, when they were most convinc'd, that there was no Confidence to be placed in the Arm of Flesh, or Strength of Armies, but that all their Help and Victory was to come from God? Again, who were the Persons in the *New Testament*, who made their most importune Addresses to Christ? Were they not those, who were most sensible of their own Unhappiness, and of the want they had of his Compassion and Help? If this be what the Scripture suggests, why should the Judgments of Men be now so much chang'd, as to think those, who stand before Christ, like the proud *Pharisees*, and scarce ask any thing of him, to have a greater Hope in him, than such, as with *Mary Magdalen*, in Humility, Tears, and Voluntary Offerings, importune him for Mercy? This can be the Effect of nothing but Passion; which not approving of Self-denials, cannot see them in others, but to justify it self, lays the Scandal of Presumption and Self-Confidence on the Methods of a Penitential Humility, and an entire Hope in God; and thus with the Cry, of Hope in the Lord, are the Ways of Hope brought into Contempt, and almost canted out of the World.

As therefore all the Self-denying Exercises

cises of an Humble Penitent, must, according to the Scripture Idea, be judg'd the Effect of Self-distrust, and the Argument of a firm Hope in God; because nothing is undertaken, but with a Confidence in God, and an earnest Desire of his Grace; so the same Judgment is to be made of other Devotions, approv'd by the Church, and in particular of that, where the Faithful on Earth desire the Blessed in Heaven to Pray to God for them. For what is it they ask of the Blessed Spirits above? It is only to Pray for them: This is the only Design of all the Petitions, in whatever manner they are express'd, and is all that the Church teaches. And to whom are they desir'd to Pray? To God alone. In whom then is their Confidence, while they expect nothing, but from God; and believe, that nothing can be obtain'd from him, but thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ? Are not their Eyes fix'd upon him, as the Treasure of all Mercy? Is not their Heart upon him, as the Fountain of all Goodness? Is it not on the Dispensations of his Bounty they depend? And do they not plainly express their Belief of God, having all in his Power, and their whole Expectation to be from him, while they call in the most Perfect of all Creatures

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tures to become Petitioners to him, that from him they may obtain what they want? When I desire my Neighbor or Friend to Pray for me, this shews the Earnestness of my Desires for obtaining what I want: This shews the little Confidence I have in my own Endeavors; but while I desire him to Pray to God for me, does this shew my Confidence to be in him, or in God? 'Tis true, I hope that God will hear his Prayers, because I think him to be Just; but still my Hope is in God, who has promis'd to hear the Prayers of the Just: There is no more than this, when I desire the Blessed in Heaven to Pray for me. I desire God to grant me what I want, and I desire those to join with me in Asking; whom, being Just, I have Reason to think God will hear: My Hope here is in God, to whom I desire the Blessed to become Petitioners; and I have no other Hope in them, than what I have in the Just on Earth, which is to hope, that God will hear them. And while I know, that neither the Just on Earth or Heaven can obtain any thing, but thro' the Merits of Christ, 'tis thus I desire them to Pray for me; seeking both by my own Prayers and theirs, to become Partaker of his Merits; which is a Practice

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of Charity prescrib'd by the Gospel, in requiring us to Pray for one another. And if it be both Honorable to God, and Consistent with the Mediatorship of Christ, to ask this Charity of a Sinner upon Earth, there can be no Exception, upon this Account, against asking the same of the Saints in Heaven; since the same Hope I have in God in the one Case, I have likewise in the other, and in both equally depend on the Merits of Christ. For it is thou, O Jesus, whom I confess my God, my Redeemer, and my Advocate with the Father; I believe I can obtain nothing, but in Virtue of thy Sacred Passion; all that I seek by my own Prayers, or Penitential Works, or by the Prayers of others, whether on Earth, or in Heaven, is that I may have a Part in Thee, and by Thee may be recommended to the Mercy of my God. O Jesus, in Thee I hope, be to me a Jesus, and save me.

Septuagesima-Sunday.

BEing come to the time, which the Church has appointed for our preparing for *Lent*, we cannot now better employ our Thoughts, than in considering, what is the Design of the Church, in the Institution of this Holy Fast approaching,

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proaching, and in what manner we are to observe it, for reaping the Benefits so Piously intended for us.

To make some Discovery in this Matter, we are to consider, *First*, That the Church looks upon us, as we are, that is, as Sinners, who have Infinite Ways provok'd the Anger of God against us; not only by the Omissions and Neglects of such Duties, which have been justly expected from us, both in regard of himself, our Neighbor, and our own Souls; but likewise, by the wilful Violation of the Commandments, which he has strictly enjoin'd us to observe. Many of these are known to us, and many others, thro' Neglect, or the Blindness occasion'd by our Passions, are hid from us: But whether known or unknown, the Guilt is still ours, and this certainly puts us under the Displeasure of God.

2dly, The Church considering the terrible Effects of God's Wrath upon those, who have provok'd it against themselves by Sin; as in the Angels banish'd from Heaven, and doom'd eternally to Hell; in our First Parents turn'd out of Paradise, and entailing Death, with a Thousand other Evils, both of Soul and Body, on their Generation for ever; in all Mankind, except Seven Persons, drown'd in the Flood;

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in the Inhabitants of several Cities consum'd with Fire from Heaven; in the Children of *Israel*, remarkable for the heavy Judgments, which follow'd them in Punishment of their Offences; besides infinit other Instances, set down in Holy Writ; and the last Judgment already publish'd against Sinners, in being condemn'd to an everlasting Separation from God in Eternal Fire: The Church, I say, considering the terrible Effects of God's Wrath against those, who have provok'd it by Sin, judges our State to be, on this Account, very unhappy, and, like a Pious Mother, desires to shew a true Compassion to us.

For this end, *Thirdly*, the Church considers, what may be the most effectual Means, for turning away the Anger of God from us, and preventing his Judgments falling upon us; and examining, for this end, the Sacred Records of God's Word, and the Lessons there set down for our Instructions; she finds there, that nothing is so powerful, in disarming the Hand of God, stretch'd out against Sinners, as suing for Mercy, by Fasting and Prayer, by Sackcloth and Ashes, and other such Expressions of an Humble and Contrite Heart: By these Exercises, she finds, that God has often revok'd the Sen-
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tence pass'd against Sinners, and withdrawing his Judgments, receiv'd them into Mercy.

Upon these Considerations, the Church, Solicitous for the Salvation of all, proclaims a general Fast to all, requiring the Faithful to humble themselves before God, in Prayer, Fasting and Alms, to solicit for Mercy by the Sighs and Tears of Contrition, and to use their best Endeavors for reversing the Sentence of Condemnation, which they have provok'd by their Sins. 'Tis a hard thing to be separated from God for ever; 'tis an unhappy State, to be Companions and Scorn of Devils; to be the Fuel of ever Tormenting, but never Consuming Fire; this is not the Portion for which we were Created; the everlasting Possession of God was prepar'd for us, by that Power, which gave us a Being; this Inheritance, forfeited by Sin, was again purchas'd for us by the Blood of our Redeemer. If we have been so unhappy, as to make void these Effects of the Divine Power and Mercy by our Iniquity, we are yet not past Remedy; we have still the Mercy of God inviting and calling upon us to return; we are now entring into a time, if God grants Life, wherein, by a due Compliance with the Orders of the

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Church, we may again make our Peace with God, and from the Prospect of Eternal Misery, recover the Hopes of Everlasting Happiness. This may be the comfortable Effect of a *Lent* duly observ'd; for this end it was ordain'd, and for this end the Church now Summons you to prepare for it, that you may not be for ever Miserable, but Happy Souls.

Neither is this Summons the Concern only of those, who, thro' their present Disorders, have Reason to apprehend themselves under the Divine Displeasure; but of such likewise, who, by Repentance, have recover'd the Favor of Heaven; and of those too, who, by a stricter Disciplin of the Inward and Outward Man, entertain Hopes, of never having lost their Baptismal Grace. For since all bring with them into the World a Corrupt Nature, abounding with many Passions, which incline them to Sin; and the greatest part have been so unhappy, as by a Vicious Indulgence to strengthen these Passions, and encrease the Difficulties of Salvation; hence the Penitential Exercises of *Lent* become necessary for all, that by them they may obtain Grace, to establish them against the Dangers of their own Corruption, and abate the Violence of their Passions, which they have en-

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enflam'd by as many ways, as they have yielded to them.

To make then a good Preparation for *Lent*, all ought, at this time, to look seriously into the State of their Souls, and examining the Strength of every Passion, see what may be necessary for moderating and bringing them to a due Subjection to Reason, and the Will of God. If Vanity, Pride and Ambition, carry the Soul with Violence, in seeking the Esteem of the World, and the Applause of Men; is there not a Necessity, that such a Soul should embrace the Ways of Humility prescrib'd in *Lent*, by entring first into the Consideration of its own Nothing, of its Infinit Misery contracted by Sin, of the Eternal Misery, which waits for the Confusion of all its Pride, and then resolve upon retrenching whatever it has taken up to flatter and feed this Ambitious Evil, and by due Endeavors to make it sensible of its own Unworthiness. If Prodigality or Covetousness disorder the Soul, it ought to be consider'd, what Parsimony is necessary on the one side, and Liberality on the other, for bringing it to a more Christian Temper; and accordingly ought the Practice to be regulated in *Lent*, by shutting the Hand against all unnecessary Expence, and opening

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pening it to the Poor. If there be so great an Indulgence in Eating or Drinking, as to be in Love with Excess, this Evil cannot be overcome, but by observing the stricter Rules of Temperance; and it ought now to be concluded, that the Rigorous Abstinence of *Lent*, and punishing the Appetite, in the Denial of its most earnest Desires, is absolutely necessary for removing the Health of the Soul. If Sensuality either in Thought or Action defile the Soul with such Impurities, as render it incapable of that Blessing promis'd to the Clean of Heart; does not this plainly discover the Necessity of Subduing and Crucifying the Flesh, and separating from all such Conversation, as gratifie this Brutish Passion? And ought there not now be a Resolution taken, of embracing so heartily the Disciplin of *Lent*, both in Retirement, Fasting and Prayer, as may make the Soul sensible of its Misfortune, punish the Rebellious Flesh, and teach it to be affraid of offending, when the Conditions of Repentance are so very uneasie to it.

Thus, whatever the Evil be, it certainly stands in need of the Exercises of *Lent* for its Remedy. This all Christians must confess; and therefore, while the Church calls them to the strict Observance of

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it, they may be assur'd, it is only in Compassion to them, that they may have the Opportunity of mastering those Evils, which otherwise will master them, and not be left to perish under the Violence of their own Corruption. If any have a Promise of being admitted into Heaven with all their Disorders; such have no Concern here; but, if the Rule be, that nothing Polluted shall have Entrance; then the Rule is as General, That all ought to use due Means for overcoming their Disorders, and in seeking the Divine Grace, by which they may be secur'd against them; and then let all see, whether it concerns them to keep *Lent* or no.

There is still another reason for this, in which all Mankind are concern'd, for since all have sinn'd, all are to remember, there is Punishment due to their Sins; for it is the Decree of God's Justice, in regard of Man, either that he sin not, or that he be punish'd, if he sin. *Every Sin, says S. Augustin, in Ps. 8. whether little or great, is to be punish'd; and this Punishment must come either from the Hand of God, or of the Penitent Sinner. If therefore we desire to obtain Mercy from God, let us punish our Sins. God cannot shew Mercy to those, who sin in flattering their*

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their Sins; there is a Necessity, that either we punish them, or that God punish them; and the only way for preventing his Chastisements, is to punish them our selves. This is the Sense of the Church, this is the Doctrine receiv'd from the Primitive Christians; thus the Scripture teaches, in requiring all to Do Penance; thus has God taught us from the several Instances of his Justice, not only upon Obstinate, but also Penitent Sinners, as in the Case of Moses and David, &c.

All Sinners then, that is, all Mankind, ought to look upon themselves in Debt to the Divine Justice, this Debt they are as strictly bound to satisfy, as Justice can oblige them; and this Satisfaction ought to be proportion'd to the Weight and Number of their Sins; not but that Christ has fully satisfied for all, but that it has so seem'd Good to the Justice of God, not to apply the Satisfaction of Jesus Christ, but to those, who following his Example, conform themselves to this Law of his Justice, and thus labor to be united to their Head; in Virtue of whose Merits alone, our Sufferings find Acceptance with God. Now it is principally in *Lent* the Church gives all an Opportunity of discharging those Debts, they have contracted by their past Offences;

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fences; every Self-denial undertaken for the Punishment of Sin, will be accepted by God, as the Punishment of it. The Debts of Intemperance, and an Indulg'd Appetite, may be acquitted by Fasting; the Debts of Pride, by the Penance of a Voluntary Humility and Abjection; the Debts of Prodigality and Covetousness, by Liberal Alms; the Debts of neglected Devotion, by the constant Exercise of Prayer; the Debts of Sensuality, by Recollection, and the Contradictions of the Senses and Passions in their most desir'd Objects; the Debts of Anger, by an Industrious Meekness; the Debts of Sloth, by a strict Application to every Duty, and by renouncing that Laziness, which like a heavy Clog, is ever pulling back, upon the Proposal of any Generous and Christian Action.

These being some Principal Considerations, which has mov'd the Church to ordain the Holy Fast now approaching, we ought now seriously to weigh the Matter every one within our own Breast; and as far as we have Reason to apprehend our selves concern'd, so far ought we to resolve upon taking the Advantage of the Opportunity offer'd. If we let Inclination determine our Resolution, we shall certainly contrive Ways for shifting the Bur-

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Burthen, or for taking off the weight; but if we judge by Interest, we shall find our Concern to be so great, in turning away the Anger of God, in subduing or governing our Passions, in discharging the Debts of our past Iniquities, that we shall conclude no Difficulties great, which bring these Advantages with them, but embrace them with the Comfort of a reviv'd Soul; which having been long in Despair, has at length Expedients of Mercy offered her. Give Light, O God, to our Hearts, that we may see our own Misery, and hence, not fear, but rejoice in the Approach of thy Remedies. I am certain, were we but truly sensible of our present Danger, we could have no greater Comfort, than in the Proposal of Help; but now, while we dread Relief, 'tis a sign, we either believe not our selves in Misery, or love it. Leave us not, O God, in this our Blindness, but by thy Grace shew us, how miserable we are, and carry us on by thy Power in such Ways, as may bring us to a better State.

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WHoever has seriously look'd into the Motives for the Institution of *Lent*, and sees that it is prescrib'd to Christians, as a proper Means for making their Peace with God, for preventing his Judgments, for subduing their own Rebellious Passions, and for discharging those Penal Debts, they have contracted by their Sins, will in this presently discover, that the Observation of *Lent*, as it has Regard to these Ends, cannot consist in any outward Ceremony only; but more principally, in the Inward Disposition of the Heart; which, considering the End of its Institution, is Solicitous so to comply with the Rules of *Lent*, that the Observance of it may be serviceable for that End, and as careful in avoiding whatever is disagreeable with those Sacred Purposes, for which it is ordain'd.

This is obvious to the least reflecting Thought: For what Regard can God have to our Eating, as consider'd in it self; or what Sanctification is there more in Fish, than in Flesh? God has nowhere promis'd, that Change of Diet shall be the Pardon of Sins; nor has he
any

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any where given a greater Blessing to the Waters, than to the Land, that their Product should be the more Powerful Atone-ment with him. Is it not plain too, that he, who eats Fish, may be as great a Sinner, as others, who confine not themselves to that Diet; and that there may be a great Luxury in a Table furnish'd from the Sea, as in the greatest Rarities, which the Earth affords? It is not therefore to the Outward Ceremony of abstaining from Flesh, or of eating but one Meal a Day, can be attributed those Comfortable Effects of Reconciliation with God, and cancelling that Debt, which stands against us: These must be expected from the good Disposition of Soul, with which such a Fast is observ'd, and this it is we are to consider at present.

First then, since the Church has commanded the time of *Lent* to be observ'd in Fasting, if we undertake this Fast in Obedience to the Law of the Church, this Obedience may render our Fast acceptable to God. Because God has declar'd Obedience to be better than Sacrifice, and has annex'd all Blessings to it: *Behold*, says he, *I set before you this Day a Blessing, and a Curse: A Blessing, if you obey the Commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this Day; and a Curse,*

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Curse, if you will not obey, Deut. 11. 26. Now God having not only deliver'd to us the Precepts there mention'd, but likewise commanded all of the New Law to hear the Church of Christ, and obey those, whom he has put over us: *Obey them, that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves, for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give Account, Heb. 13. 17.* And having likewise declar'd, *He that hears you, hears me, and he that despises you, despises me, Luke 10. 16.* It cannot be doubt-ed, but Obedience here is Obeying God; and that a Blessing is promis'd to those, that obey, and a Curse to those, that obey not. As therefore, it is not to be question'd, but the Obedience of the first Christians was acceptable to God, in complying with the Decree of the Church, for the time it was in force, of *Abstaining from Blood, and things strangled, Acts 15. 29.* and by this Submission had a part in the promis'd Blessing; so it must be acknowledged, that complying with the present Law of the Church, enjoining Abstinence from Flesh, and Fasting for the whole Time of *Lent*, has a like Value with God; and that being undertaken in Submission to his Will, is a part of that Obedience, to which God has promis'd a Blessing.

adly, If in observing the Fast of Lent,

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as is prescrib'd by the Church, we find many Difficulties in the ungrateful Restraint upon the Appetite, and, upon the Consideration of our Sins, submit to those Difficulties; concluding within our selves, that being Sinners, we are unworthy of the Blessings of God; that 'tis Just we should be depriv'd of them; 'tis Just we should be punish'd; and thus endeavor daily to humble our selves under the Sense and Chastisement of our Offences, it must be again confess'd, that such Self-denials embraced upon the Motive of our Unworthiness, and of the infinit Provocations we have given to Heaven by our Sins, are most powerful with God, both for turning away his Judgments, and obtaining his Mercy; and that, if in this Spirit of an Humble Repentance, we perform the Fast of *Lent*, we have Reason to hope for the Favor of our God, in the Pardon of our Sins, and discharge of our Debts. For this Hope we have so much Authority from Scripture both in Directions given, in Promises made, and in the many Instances of God being thus mov'd to Mercy, that it cannot be question'd, without Injury to the Word of God, and questioning his Truth.

3dly, If amidst the various Inclinations of Appetite, we strictly observe the Rules
of

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of *Lent*, and give it no farther Liberty, than the Church allows, we in this gain one Command upon our selves, in a Point, very subject to Excess, and so far are in the Practice of this necessary Lesson, *That all Desires are not to be gratified*. This is no small Help to Virtue; and if we extend this Practice farther, according to the Design of the Church, considering what our usual Disorders are, and endeavoring to put such a Restraint upon our Desires, as to cut off all that Indulgence, which has hitherto been Sinful in us; if we take Advice, what Self-denials or Separations may be most proportion'd to our distemper'd Mind, and, with the Design of disengaging our selves from our wonted Slavery, resolutely pursue the Method that is approv'd: If, by conversing with good Books, we labour to efface the Idea's of whatever is unlawful, and renew our Mind with better Impressions of our Duty; if we daily importune Heaven by Prayers and Tears, to strengthen us with Grace for mastering our own Corruption; if we offer to God all the Uneasiness we find, and make a Sacrifice to him of the unavoidable Contradictions and Struggles of our Rebellious Nature; if, in the Spirit of a true Humility, we desire him to have Regard to our Sufferings,

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ings, and accept them, united with the Merits of Christ, our Head, in Punishment of our past Offences; if, I say, we follow this Method in *Lent*, is it not evident from all that the Scripture teaches, that we are in the surest Way for breaking the Force of those ill Habits, which have hitherto kept us in Subjection, and of making an entire Reconciliation with our God? This then is the Disposition of Mind, with which we are to undertake this Fast; this will take from it the Scandal of being an Unprofitable Ceremony, and render it an Acceptable Fast to our Lord, and most Beneficial to our Souls.

But if this be the thing, which makes the Fast of *Lent* a Christian Action, and fits it for accomplishing those great Ends, for which it was ordain'd; let it then be consider'd, how little they are their own Friends, who join, in some Measure, in the Ceremony of Fasting, and are not Solicitous for undertaking it with this Holy Disposition, but rather seem to renounce it, in using all manner of Contrivances, for making void its Effects, or professedly standing against them.

First, Those, who keeping within the seeming Bounds of *Lent*, put Art and Money upon the Stretch, for making such Preparations, that they may have no
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Difficulty in keeping *Lent*, but even then study their Appetite, as much as at other times, only then courting them from the Sea, instead of the Land; as if one Self-love were to make Atonement for another, and the Gluttony and Intemperance of the whole Year, were to be cancell'd in the Sight of God, by the Change of Excess.

2dly, Those, who observe the Ceremony of *Lent*, and then make no Scruple of spending the Day, or, at least, Hours of it over their Cups.

3dly, Those, who are not Solicitous to reform the Disorders of their Lives, but go on boldly in all the Ways of their usual Weaknesses and Sins.

4thly, Those, who think not of Humbling themselves before God, or offering Violence to Heaven by the Sighs of a Contrite Heart.

5thly, Those, who are not watchful over their Passions, nor labor to retrench all their Sinful Excess.

6thly, Those, who take no Care to punish their past Iniquities, but industriously avoiding all that mortifies, study their Pleasure, their own Will, and their Ease.

As to all these, I think they are unhappy, in not knowing the things, that are
for

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for their Peace, and neglecting the Opportunities of offer'd Mercy. I do not here enter into the Question, Whether by these Ways they break their Fast? For if I allow, that they keep it, this can be understood of no more, than of the Outward Ceremony; and what is this to their Purpose, if they have no Part of that Spirit, which is to render it agreeable to God? And, what if their Interior Disposition be so Perverse, as to oppose all the Designs of Fasting, and obviate its Effects? If they keep such a Fast as this, are they the more Holy? Are they nearer Mercy? They may have something, upon this, to glory before Men, but they can have no Glory with God, who regards no more such Fasting, than he does the Prayer of the Hypocrite, who honoring God with his Lips, has his Heart far from him; and therefore, instead of Favor, meets with nothing but Reproach.

I need not enlarge upon this Subject; for it being evident, that no Outward Action of Man can find Acceptance with God, but as far as it proceeds from the Spirit and Heart directed towards God; it must likewise be above dispute, that the Observance of a Fast can neither be Acceptable to God, nor have any Effect

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upon the Soul, but only as far as the Soul makes use of this, as a Holy Expedient for approaching nearer to God; and therefore, that all those, who keep a kind of Fast, but without any Interior Disposition, either of Seeking God, or of Acknowledgment of Sin, or Desire of Amendment, or of Overcoming themselves, do not perform a Christian Fast, and can expect none of those good Effects, which the Church proposes in the Institution of the Approaching Fast. Let but the Fast of *Moses* be consider'd, *Deut. 9. 18.* *I fell down, says he, before the Lord, Forty Days and Forty Nights; I did neither eat Bread, nor drink Water, because of all your Sins, which you committed against the Lord, and provok'd him to Anger. Let the Fast of the Israelites be consider'd, Judges 20. 26. Then all the Children of Israel, and all the People went up, and came to the House of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that Day until Evening, and offer'd Burnt-Offerings and Peace-Offerings before the Lord, and enquired of the Lord, what was his Holy Will. Let all other Fasts, mention'd in Scripture, be consider'd, with the happy Effects they had, in moving God to Mercy; and if it be observ'd, that they were all underraken upon the Consideration of God's Dis-*
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pleasure for Sin, and were accompanied with Prayers, and Tears, and Repentance; and then Christians may see what their Fast must be, if they expect the like good Effects of it. We must confess, O God, thou hast manifested to us the Means, how we may turn away thy Anger, and make our Peace with thee; and we must confess too, that if we follow not thy Direction, it is because Self-love abounding in us, abuses thy most Sacred Institutions, and puts us upon seeking our selves, where it is both our Duty and Interest to seek thee. Over-rule this Corruption, I beseech thee, by thy Grace.

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HAVING declar'd in the foregoing *Sundays*, what were the principal Motives of the Church in the Institution of *Lent*, and with what Dispositions Christians are to observe it, for partaking of the happy Effects design'd for them; we are now to enquire, what is the External Fast, which the Church has enjoin'd, and who are oblig'd to observe it?

The External Fast, which the Church has enjoin'd, allows but of One Meal in the

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the Day, and that, regularly, about Noon, with the Permission of a Small Collation at Night.

Flesh-meat is forbid on all Fasting Days, and in *Lent* all that comes from Flesh, such are all Whit-meats, as Eggs, Cheese, Butter, Milk. No Flesh then ought to be part of the Meal on Fasting Days, nor Whit-meats in *Lent*, except only as they are allow'd by Dispensation. Butter and Milk are here with us generally allow'd to all; but it being an Indulgence, it ought regularly be publish'd as such, at the opening of *Lent*.

The Precept of the Church does not distinguish, as to the manner of Fasting, *Ash-Wednesday* and *Good-Friday* from other Days in *Lent*; and therefore whatever Rigor is observ'd on those Days, is only a Pious Custom of the Faithful, but not a Precept.

The Meal on Fasting Days ought to be about Noon; that is, not before Eleven a Clock; except there be some just Cause for doing otherwise; as for beginning a Journey, for some Infirmary, or for Business, which require it. As for putting off the Meal till Afternoon, there can be no Difficulty; because the Church allows all, the Discretionary Liberty of Fasting as long as there may be Reason for it;

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and the Afternoon is more conform to the Primitive Practice; Eating sooner being an Indulgence to Human Weakness.

The Meal may be deferr'd till Night, and a Collation taken in the Morning, or at Noon, when there is just Cause for it; as there may be upon a Journey, and sometimes in Business.

A Collation is allow'd at Night by the Indulgence of the Church. As to what things may be Eat for Collation, the Custom of each Country must give direction. In this Nation it is not permitted, at Collation, to Eat any kind of *Fish* or *Whit-meats*; that is, Eggs, Cheese, Milk or Butter: Cakes and Wigs are Customary, tho' not made without some Butter; and yet this is not sufficient Plea for putting Butter into other things, that are Eat for Collation, as Gruels, &c. nor for those Rich Cakes, where the quantity of Butter and other Ingredients being design'd to flatter the Palat, seem not agreeable to the Indulgence granted, nor have sufficient Custom to plead for them.

As for the quantity of what may be Eat for Collation, nothing can be positively determin'd by Weight or Measure, as a general Rule for all. The End of the Indulgence must be consider'd, which

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is only to support Nature, and make it hold out to the next Meal, so as to be capable of performing its usual Duties, without any considerable Prejudice to Health, or the Obligations of each respective State. The thing then that ought to be enquir'd, is not, How much may be allow'd ; but, *How little* will suffice for this end ; and I think the most general Rule may be, of Eating as much as comes to the Quantity of a Moderate Breakfast, or an Afternooning at other times of the Year. And those, who have regard to the End of this Holy Institution, and the Advantages propos'd in it, will make their Collation of such things, and with that sparing Hand, as seem nearest to answer the Necessity of Nature, without any regard to the Demands of Appetite ; because this is the Spirit of *Lent*, and one Disposition necessary for obtaining the Advantages of it.

So far as this is either allow'd or indulg'd to all in *Lent* ; and to Servants or others, who by Waiting or Business are forc'd to Dine late, it is permitted to take some little Refreshment, about the time, when others Dine ; but this only by way of a necessary help, for holding out, without Prejudice of Health, till they have Convenience for finishing
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their Meal, of which this may be reckon'd the beginning.

Besides this, nothing more is allow'd as to Eating; and therefore to Eat Fruit betwixt Meals, or Sweat-meats, &c. cannot be done without breaking the Fast. And as for taking Bread and Drink in the Morning, if Custom has any where rais'd the Practice above Scruple, I do not there question it; but otherwise, I think it ought not to be done, but where Health or Infirmary require it.

The Obligation of observing the Fast of *Lent*, and other Days prescribed, falls upon all the Faithful of both Sexes, from the Age of One and Twenty; and so on till they come to Sixty Years. But Sixty Years being compleat, they are no longer Tied by this Law, as was declar'd by *Pius V.* and in *Bull. Cruc.* of the Years 1569 and 1570: As related, upon Good Authority, by *Pet. Marchant. Traët. de Prac. Eccles. q. 4. de Jejun.* And this is to be understood, even of those, who feel nothing of the Infirmities of Age: Because tho' there be no sensible decay, yet Nature must necessarily be declining, and to give it frequent Checks, cannot likely be without preparing it for irrecoverable Infirmities.

But however, tho' the Obligation of Fasting

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Fasting be thus general, yet the Church, as a tender Mother, exempts many Particular Persons from it; that is, all those, who cannot satisfy the Precept, but with considerable Prejudice to their Health, or are any ways disabled: As, First, all those, who are Sick, or under any Habitual Indisposition of Body, or have Reason to provide against some Distemper, which seems to threaten. Amongst these are comprehended Women with Child, and those, that give Suck, because Fasting must generally be Injurious either to them or their Child.

2dly, Laboring People; that is, all those, who Rise so early, or Work so hard, that they cannot observe the Rules of Fasting without Prejudice to their Health, and Domestic Affairs. Amongst these are likewise reckon'd Travellers, that is, those, who either thro' the Difficulty, or ill Circumstances of the Way, or their own Weakness, are subject to such disorders in Travelling, that their Health or Business must suffer, if they keep to the Rigor of Fasting. And this may more easily here happen amongst us, where the want of Convenience for being provided of a sufficient Meal on such Days, may bring People to the Necessity of Eating oftner in the Day, than could otherwise be allow'd.

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3dly, The Poor; that is, such as Beg, or are under such Ill Circumstances, that they can seldom make a full Meal; for if these make up a Dinner by parts, and Eat several Times in the Day, it cannot be imputed in them to Contempt, or an unwilling Mind, but to Necessity, because they cannot do otherwise; and for the support of Health, which must necessarily sink, if this liberty was not granted to them.

All these are excus'd by the Church from the Obligation of Fasting; that is, are not Tied to the Rule of Eating but One Meal in the Day, but may Eat oftner. But this does not give them the Liberty of Eating Flesh, except it be otherwise judg'd Necessary. And hence tho' Laboring People, Travellers, Breeding-Women and Nurses, may suppose themselves not oblig'd to Fast; yet they must not upon this take the Liberty of Eating Flesh; for this requires a farther Consideration and Leave from those, who have Skill to Judge, and Faculties to Determin the Case.

To proceed therefore with Satisfaction, in all this Matter of being excus'd from Fasting, there ought to be this Method observ'd, as far as Circumstances will permit. First, Some Proper Person is to be consulted, whose Skill qualifies them for judging,

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judging, whether Fasting, as the Church prescribes, is likely to be Prejudicial to them. Then the Determination ought to be represented to the Pastors of the Church, and from them is to be receiv'd direction of what is to be done; because the Laws of the Church are Subject to none but the Church, and therefore all kinds of Dispensations are to be had from the Pastors of it.

And in this Point it is to be strictly observ'd, that none take greater Liberty than is given: For there may be Cases, in which a Person may have leave to Eat Flesh at Dinner, and yet still be Tied to the Rule, of Eating but One Meal in the Day. There may be Cases, wherein a Person may have Liberty of Drinking Milk, or such like, at certain times of the Day, and yet, as to other Particulars, be bound to the Observance of *Lent*. These Cases are according to the Exigency of Health; and Dispensations being granted with Reference to Health, so far they may be us'd, as they are granted, and no farther.

This is the Rule, as to Exemptions from Fasting, and is to be follow'd, where Circumstances will allow it. But where the Case is evident, and the Church has already judg'd it to be excus'd

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from Fasting, as in dangerous Sicknes, &c. here there need be no Scruple of doing what Necessity requires, tho' there be no Physician to declare it, or Pastor to give leave; because such leave may then be presum'd. This I say, when the Case is evident, and so judg'd by proper Persons; because there are some, whose Judgment is over-rul'd by Affection, as many times betwixt Husband and Wife, Parents and Children; and these upon every light and seeming Indisposition, presently conclude, there is a Necessity of breaking the Fast, when, many times, Fasting is the best Remedy, that can be prescrib'd; here then there may be sometimes Reason for Appealing from their Determination, to some others, whose Judgment is not to be suspected of this Partiality; because in Cases, that are to be Judged, there can be no Confidence in the Equity of the Sentence, where Passion gives direction for it.

Hitherto of Fasting; now as to those, who are only oblig'd to Abstinence; and of these we need add no more, than two Words. *First*, that at Seven Years Old, 'tis expected that Children should observe the Rules of Abstinence, in abstaining from Flesh, except it be otherwise judg'd necessary for their Health; and if they are

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are of a good Constitution, it must be Commendable in Parents to begin sooner with them, so at least, as to bring them to it by degrees.

2dly, That those who are oblig'd to Abstinence, tho' at Liberty of Eating as often as they think fit, yet are to Eat of no other things, than what is permitted to others, who are bound to Fast; so that they are restrain'd to those Whit-meats, which are allow'd in *Lent*, and must not Eat Eggs or Cheese, but on those Days only, when it is indulg'd to others, who Fast; except Infirmary, or some other just Reason require it, and then is to be done with leave.

These are the Principal Rules of Fasting and Abstinence, which tho' only External Observations, yet if undertaken and strictly perform'd with the Spirit of Obedience, and the other Internal Dispositions above-mention'd in the foregoing *Sundays*, cannot fail of finding Acceptance with God, and being of great Advantage to the Soul. But these Dispositions, Thou, O Lord, must give, who art the Author of all Good Gifts: Grant them, I beseech thee, to us thy Servants, that what we outwardly observe by the Direction and Command of thy Church, may, by thy

M 5 Blessing,

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Blessing, be to thy Honor, and the Benefit of our Souls.

First Sunday in Lent.

HAVING now made our Entrance into the Sacred Fast of *Lent*, and with the Knowledge both of the Dispositions and Manner requir'd for the due Observance of it, and of the great Advantage it may be to our Souls, if perform'd as it ought to be, we are now to enter into such Considerations, as may be proper to inspire us with Resolutions and Courage suitable to the undertaking.

First then, let us make every one a Serious Reflection upon our past Lives, and place our selves before our selves this Day, considering how great our unworthiness is, occasion'd by the Infinite Number and Unaccountable Horror of our Sins; let us look at our Ingratitude, in the continual Abuse of God's Blessings; view our Injustice, in our vile Preference of all Creatures to God; in being infinitely more concern'd for Earth than Heaven, and despising the Will of God, to gratifie our own perverse Inclinations: Let us consider how many ways we have transgress'd

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gress'd the Divine Law; and when we have reckon'd up all we know, yet how many still remain unknown to us, both in the Scandals we have given, and the Ill Example, by which we have provok'd or encourag'd others to Sin? And when we have look'd over our whole Account, and find Reason to conclude, that there is not any thing we have done well in our whole Lives, nor any one Power of Soul or Body, which we have not abus'd, to the Offence of God, whom we were oblig'd to Serve with all Fidelity, and to Love with all our Hearts: Then,

2dly, Let us examin, what the State of our Soul may be upon these Premises; we know, we have offended God; we are certain, that we have provok'd his Displeasure; but we are uncertain as to all our suppos'd Repentance, whether we have sought Mercy with that Sincerity, as to have obtain'd Pardon for any one Sin we have committed. May not we then yet stand under the guilt of all our Sins? May not the Justice of God be arm'd against us? And what if we wait the Hour, when it shall fall with its whole Weight upon us? May not the Effect of this be, to grant us no more Time for Repentance, who have already abus'd so much? May it not be, for excluding us from

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from any farther Participation of his Grace, who have so long been Obstinate against it? May it not be, for Surprizing us with suddain Death in our Sins? May it not be, for Giving us up to a Reprobate Sense? May it not be, for Casting us out into utter Darkness, where we are never more to be in a Possibility of seeing his Face? All this may be, because we know the Judgment of God against Sin; and know there is no Priviledge against it, but only by the Effect of a Hearty and Sincere Repentance. But,

3dly, Is it not to be consider'd, that however Miserable the present State of our Souls may be, under the Guilt of our past Iniquities; yet may we not still Hope, that the Execution of God's Justice may be prevented, if we make a timely Application to his Mercy for the Pardon of our Sins? Who knows, but that this very time, we have now begun, is the Effect of the Divine Mercy towards us, granted for making our Peace; and that if we heartily Humble our selves in Fasting and Prayer, and seek for Mercy by the Sighs of a Contrite Heart, we may turn away the Anger of God from us, and by the Labor of a Few Days, prepare a Way for Eternal Rest. The Sentence was pronounc'd against *Nineve*; *Yet Forty Days* and

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and Nineve shall be overthrown. Who knows but these may be our Forty Days ; that if in them we turn to God, like the *Ninevites*, we may, like them, find Mercy ; and, if we Neglect them, this Neglect may fill up the Number of our Sins, and leave us without Remedy to the Rigor of that Justice, which we have provok'd against us?

4thly, Let it be consider'd, how little it is, that God and the Church at present demand of us, in proportion to the Advantages propos'd to us. The Advantages propos'd, are, to disarm the Justice of God, to render him favorable to us, to prepare the Terrors of Death and the last Judgment, to escape the Torments of an Everlasting Hell, and to obtain the Inheritance purchas'd for us by the Blood of Christ, in the Eternal Possession of God ; and is not all this our own Good ? Is not this our own greatest Interest ? Is not this the End, for which we were Created, for which we came into this World, and had a Being given us ? And what is demanded of us, for the Purchase ? It is only to Fast and Pray, to be Watchful against our own Corruption, to overcome our Passions, and by Self-denials something proportion'd to our Sins, to seek the Mercy of God. Here is nothing in this,
but

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but what, if we have the least Love of Justice, it will oblige to undertake; the common Morality even of the Heathens have put them upon the most difficult Part of it; and that, which is most uneasy in it, is no more, than what all generally undergo, and even chuse for the Recovery of Health. How do we confine our selves, upon this account? What restraints as to Company, Divertisements and Diet? What a general Stop to our Inclinations and Passions? What Self-denials in the painful Application of Remedies, and in taking such Medicines, as Nature loaths? If we submit to this uneasy Method for the regaining of Health, which cannot long continue; if we suffer this for a Body and Life, which must soon end, and may even then perish, when we are thus Laboring for their Recovery, can it be thought hard, to undertake as much for Rescuing a Soul, from the Power of Hell, and Regaining a Life, which shall be Eternal? We must Forfeit our Title to Reason, if what we embrace as reasonable, in favor of a Dying Life, we reject as insufferable, when 'tis for the securing endless Happiness. We renounce our Faith, if we bid so much for a Moment, and then except against the Price, when Heaven is offer'd upon the same Terms.

Lastly,

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Lastly, if we consider, what the Apostles, what the Primitive Christians suffer'd, in the Hope of Glory; if we but glance at their Daily Persecutions, their Cruel Torments, and Frightful Deaths. If we look at the vast Numbers of those, who bid Farewel to the World, and all its Charms, who Hid themselves in Caves and Desarts, who Fasted not a few Weeks only, but all their Lives, and this without any Contrivance of Art to please their Appetite, but with the easie Products of the Earth, with Herbs, and Pulse, who made the Ground their Bed, and Prayer and Labor the whole Business of their Lives, who Fought every Day against themselves, and by Rigorous Self-denials Subdued their Flesh, that their Souls might be more at Liberty, and not be kept down with the Clog of Rebellious Earth. If we endeavor to frame some Idea of their Method, by that Description S. Jerome gives of himself in his Epistle to Eustochium. *Being in the Wilderness and vast Desart of Syria, I was Scorch'd, says he, and Burnt by the Extreme Heats of the Sun; my Body was become Deform'd with the continual wearing of my Sackcloth; my Skin was as Black as the Skin of an Ethiopian: I Wept daily, my time continually pass'd away in Groans; and when Sleep at length came*
upon

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upon me against my Will, I lay down with my Naked Bones scarce Hanging together, upon the Ground.

Being in this Condition, and having shut my self up in this Prison for fear of Hell Fire, and for avoiding Sin, being now Companion only to Scorpions and Wild Beasts, and wholly Worn out with continual Fasting; yet could I not avoid Temptations, &c. Wherefore I cast my self at the Feet of Jesus, I bath'd the Ground about me with Tears, I cried unto Jesus whole Days and Nights, I ceas'd not to strike my Breast, till he arose and rebuked my Enemy. I am not asham'd to confess this Misery of my Wretched State.

If we endeavor, I say, to frame some Idea from hence of what was done amongst the Primitive Christians, for subduing Sin in themselves, and for the greater Security of their Eternal State, we cannot but condemn our selves at present, both of Excessive Self-love, of Nicety, Cowardice, and want of Faith, if we make Exceptions against this Six Weeks Fast, and think it hard, not to be exempted from it. For what can we pretend? Have we liv'd so much more Innocently than our Forefathers, that we need not be Apprehensive of the Judgments of God? Are our Sins so much fewer than theirs, that we need not
think

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not think of making Atonement for them? Is our Corruption so much less, and the Danger of Sin so inconsiderable, that we have now no reason, like them, to be watchful against it? No, there is nothing of this; for certainly the World is not mended since their time; but the Truth of it is, we love our selves more, and fear God less than they did; and this is at the bottom of all our Indulgence; so that while the Fasts of the Church are much fallen from the Rigor of those former Times, and by the Help of Art and good Contrivance, we have brought all that remains almost to the Level of Appetite; we are still uneasie under this, and Sollicitous to be exempted from it. And are not we Nice Soldiers, who pretend to make War against Sin, and are yet so fearful of hurting our selves? Did it but once seriously enter into our Heart, What it is to be under the Displeasure of God; what it is to be presented before his Tribunal, under the Guilt of Sin; what it is to suffer the endless Torments of Hell; we should not be so fearful in undertaking what is most effectual for rescuing us from these unhappy Circumstances, but should rather chuse to suffer any thing here, that might give us Hopes of being spar'd hereafter.

Not

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Not that I would have any be so Indiscreet, as to undertake, contrary to all Advice, what they are not able to bear, and by the Rashness of one Week, unfit themselves for the common Duties of many; but that I would not have them run into the other Extreme, and think they can never live, if they suffer any thing in the Contradiction of their Appetite, for this is the very thing, which the Church desires, That they should suffer in the Denial of themselves; and therefore, to find some Difficulty, and suffer in denying themselves, is not sufficient Reason for seeking a Dispensation, but is the very thing they ought to propose in keeping of *Lent*.

What therefore have we to do at present, but resolve upon obeying the Law of the Church, and upon so many pressing Motives, as we all have to suffer, resolve likewise upon offering at this time a Sacrifice to God? A Sacrifice of our Appetite, by contradicting it; a Sacrifice of our Will, by denying it; a Sacrifice of all our Passions, by subjecting them to Reason, and the Law of God: If this cannot be done, but by suffering, let us resolve to suffer: How much do we suffer, in the Year, for Pride? How much for Interest?

How

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How much for Divertisements? How much for Humor? Let us then now suffer upon a better Account, suffer for our Sins, suffer for escaping the Judgments of God, suffer for the Salvation of our Souls. We have a Master and Lord, who offer'd himself a Sacrifice for Sin, at the Price of his Blood; let us now shew our selves his Disciples, by joining our Sacrifice to his, that so we may be Partakers of his Sufferings, and of his Crown; for this is the Condition offer'd to us: If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. Grant us, O Jesus, but a Portion of thy Holy Spirit, and then that Crucified Life, which is now expected from us, will not be our Grief, but our Joy. O Jesus, may I now be Crucified to the World, that I may live to thee.

Second Sunday in Lent.

THE Principal Design of the Fast, and other Exercises of *Lent*, being for obtaining Mercy in the Pardon of all our Sins; this ought to be the Motive, to carry us on, thro' all the Difficulties we meet, both in Fasting, and in whatever other Self-denials are necessary, for overcoming

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coming all that Corruption, which we have brought with us into the World, or have contracted, by unhappily indulging our selves in those Inclinations, which we ought to have resisted. It must be a good Practice then, every Morning, thus to spur forward our Slothful or Tired Spirits: Remember, Soul, thou art a Sinner, suffer then; for 'tis just, the Offender should suffer for his Offences. Thy Sins have divided betwixt thee and God; humble thy self then in Suffering, that God may have Regard to the Humility of his Servant, and stretch forth his Hand of Mercy to thee. It is nothing but thy own Sins, which have made the Ways of Repentance so difficult to thee; submit then with Patience to the Burthen thou hast laid on thy own Shoulders, and let Sin now become its own Punishment: Is it not better to suffer the short Trouble of a timely Repentance, than to wait the Stroke of the Divine Justice, when thy Suffering will be endless, and without any Possibility of bettering thy State? What is the Trouble of Amendment, if compar'd to the Torments of Hell? What thou suffer'st now, will be attended with the Comfort of Internal Peace, and the Hopes of Everlasting Mercy; but if thou neglectest this time, who knows, but the like
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Grace may never more be offer'd thee, and thy hardned ungrateful Heart may be reserv'd for the Punishment of another Life, where there will be Despair to rack thee, without the least Hopes of Relief.

These, and other like Thoughts, may be the Morning Spur to every Christian Soul, for breaking thro' all the Opposition, which evil Habits, Sloth and Self-love will make, to discourage from the Prosecution of that Method, which the Church has prescrib'd, for gaining the Victory over Sin. And whoever is so true to his Undertaking, as, by this daily Industry, to defeat all the Attempts of his own Corruption, supported by a Malicious Enemy; and, upon the Hopes of Mercy, is constant in all those Exercises, which are now recommended; he need not question, but God will give a Blessing, and by his Grace carry him on to the Tribunal of Mercy.

But then, since Mercy is the thing we want and seek, it ought to be consider'd, What is the Will of God in this Point; for if we expect Mercy from God for the Pardon of our Sins, we are to enquire, What is the Ordinance of God; and then seek it in such manner, as he has appointed; for 'tis not that, which is most agreeable

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agreeable to our own Thoughts, will be most effectual; but that only, which God has approv'd and commanded. The Lepers of the Old Law, were the Figures of Sinners; and God having given Particular Directions to *Moses*, to be observ'd in their Cure, all such as were infected with the Leprosie, and desir'd Relief, were to seek it in such manner, as God had prescrib'd it. And since God had given order, that all who were under that Distemper, should be brought to the Priest; that the Priest should examin their Case, direct them under their Infirmary, examin again, and according as he found, pronounce them Clean or Unclean, *Lev. 13.* This Method they were to observe; and tho' it might have had some Shew of Piety, if any of them had said, God has visited me with an Infirmary, and I desire him to be my Physician; I will not seek Help from Man, but from God; all is in the Hand of the Lord, but what can Man do, who is only a poor Sinner like my self? O God, to thee I flee for Refuge, O God, heal me: Tho' this, I say, might have had some Shew of Piety, because it has the Religious Color of seeking the Lord, yet it is evident it could be no true Piety, because it carries with it an absolute Disobedience to the manifest Will

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Will of God ; Obedience is the most acceptable Sacrifice, and there can be no other so, where this is left out. To pretend therefore to seek the Lord, and at the same time, not to do what he commands, is not seeking, but departing from him ; it is not Piety, but a Degree of Rebellion.

The Lepers therefore ; that is, the Sinners of the New Law, are to seek the Remedy of their Sins in such a manner, as God has prescrib'd to them. Now in this Point, it being evident, that a Sincere Conversion of the Heart from Sin to God, being the Effect of God's Grace, they are therefore to seek this Grace from God in such a manner, as he has manifested to be most prevailing with him for this End ; that is, by Prayer, Fasting, Alms, and in the humble Acknowledgments of their own Unworthiness and Misery ; for thus God has many ways declar'd his Will. 2dly, It being evident, that no Power, but that of God, can forgive Sins committed against God, therefore they are to seek Pardon of their Sins from no other Power, but of God alone, and are to rest with their whole Confidence and Trust in this. But then, if God has so ordain'd it, that the Pastors of his Church, who are the Ministers of his

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his Word, shall be likewise the Ministers of this Power, and Administrators of it, as they are of other his most Sacred Mysteries, which he has ordain'd for the Communication of his Grace to Man: If he has so appointed it, that the Spiritual Lepers shall go to his Priests; that these shall examine and judge of their Leprosie, and pronounce them Clean or Unclean: Then all those, who are under the Guilt of Sin, are there to address themselves, where he has commanded, and to seek the Application of the Divine Power, for the Pardon of their Sins, from those, whom he has appointed the Ministers and Dispensers of this his Power: And to prevent this Order, under the Pious Pretext of seeking Help from God, and not from Man, would be an open Disobedience to God, in chusing the Ways of Man before the Ordinance of God, and therefore must be rather the Provocation of Judgment, than Expedient of Mercy.

And is it not Matter of Fact, that God has Constituted the Pastors of his Church the Ministers of this Power, for the Pardon of Sins? Hear what Christ says, *Matth. 18. 18. Verily I say to you, Whatsoever you shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever you shall*

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shall loose on Earth, shall be loos'd in Heaven. And again, John 20. 23. when he appears to his Apostles, after his Resurrection, hear what Commission he gives them; *Peace be to you; as my Father has sent me, even so send I you; and when he had said this, he breath'd on them, and says to them, Receive you the Holy Ghost; Whosoever Sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins you retain, they are retain'd.* Here is, in express Terms, this Power given to the Pastors of Christ's Church; they are constituted by Christ the Ministers of it: If so, then it is the manifest Will of God, they should administer it; then it is the Will of God, that those should apply themselves to the Pastors, to whom it is to be administered. And since the Power given, is of Binding or Loosing, of Remitting or Retaining, it is the Will of God, they should execute this Power *Justly*; that is, pronounce such a Judgment, as may be approv'd by God, and confirm'd in Heaven: This must be, by Remitting, when the Sinner is truly Penitent, and Retaining, when he is unworthy of Forgiveness. How shall they be capable of pronouncing such a Judgment, if the Case of the Penitent be not truly

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stated

stated to them; if the Dispositions of
 his Heart be not made known to them?
 Therefore, since, by God's Appoint-
 ment, they are to judge, by the same
 Appointment, they are to know what
 they judge; this cannot be, but by
 the Confession of the Penitent becom-
 ing his own Accuser, and laying open
 his Conscience to them; therefore it is
 the Appointment and Will of God,
 that Penitents should confess their Sins,
 and open the true State of their Consci-
 ence to the Pastors of the Church, that
 so these may judge, and that what they
 forgive on Earth, may be forgiven in
 Heaven. Since therefore Almighty
 God has thus manifested his Will to
 Man, his Will is to be a Rule to Man,
 'tis his Duty and Interest to obey;
 and he cannot be in a true Disposition
 of Heart, for obtaining Pardon of his
 Sins from God, if he does not, by an
 humble and ready Submission to the
 Divine Will, seek it that way, which
 God has so positively declar'd to him;
 and which his Apostle has likewise de-
 clar'd, in giving this general Com-
 mand, *Confitemini alterutrum peccata ve-*
stra. Confess your Sins to one another,
Jam. 5. 16. For to whom should this
 Confession be made, but those, to
 whom

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whom Christ had given Power to Hear, Judge and Forgive Sins?

But is not this now to go to Man, for the Pardon of Sins committed against God? And is not this to forsake God, and make Gods of Men? Is it to go to the Pastors of the Church, where God has order'd it to be so done? And to obey the Orders of God, cannot be forsaking God, but seeking him, even according to his own Appointment; and there can be no readier and surer Way of finding him, than thus to do what he orders. Did *Cornelius* forsake God, when, by God's Direction, he address'd himself to *S. Peter*, to be taught, what he ought to do? *Act. 10. 5.* Did *Saul* forsake God, when, by the Appointment of Heaven, he heard the Will of God from *Ananias*? *Act. 9. 6.* If then Sinners are inform'd by Christ himself, where he has given Power for the Pardon of Sins, to make Application there for the Pardon of Sin, can be no more forsaking God, than to wash in *Jordan* or *Siloe*, for the Relief of a Distemper, when he himself has given Direction for it.

It is true, the Power of forgiving Sins is a Divine Power; but is it not true too, that God can execute this

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Power, either immediately by himself, or by his Ministers? To suppose this Power in Man, as his own, and from his own Stock, would be so far to equal him with God: But for Man, to administer this Power, in Virtue of a Deputation from God, is not to make him God, but only the Minister of God. And in this there can be no Surprize; for was not thus *Moses* Minister of the Divine Power, in all the Wonders he wrought in *Egypt*? Was not *Joshua* so, in commanding the Sun to stand still? Was not *Peter* and *John* so, in restoring the Lame Man to the Use of his Limbs? Was not *Peter* particularly so, in raising *Tabitha* to Life? *Act. 9. 40* These were all the Effects of the Divine Power. The Power was of God, and God made Man the Minister of it. And if we come, even to the Forgiveness of Sin, is not Original Sin always, and sometimes other Sins, forgiven by the Sacrament of Baptism? And is not that Person, who administers Baptism, the Minister of that Power, by which these Sins are forgiven? If then the Forgiveness of Sin, by the Ministry of the Priest in Baptism, is so easily allow'd, why should it be made a Subject of Surprize and Scandal in another Case, where

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where the Power is more expressly given by Christ himself? The Church then teaching, *That Jesus Christ* (as 'tis express'd in the Common-Prayer-Book, in the Visitation of the Sick) *has left Power to his Church, to Absolve all Sinners, who truly Repent*; and the Priest assuming no other Power, than as is there express'd: *And by his Authority committed to me, I Absolve thee from all thy Sins, in the Name of the Father, &c.* And this being so agreeable to Holy Writ, it ought not to be question'd, but receiv'd upon the Authority of Christ, as an Institution not at all Usurping upon God, but giving due Honor to Him, and Comfort to poor Sinners. And since this, O God, is thy Holy Ordinance, make all Sinners sensible of thy Infinite Mercy, and their own Misery, that being now call'd to Repentance, they may be sincerely Converted to Thee, and with an entire Confidence in thy Power and Goodness, according to thy own Institution, seek the happy Effects of thy Mercy.

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CHRIST having manifested his Will, in giving Direction to Sinners, where he would have them make their Application, for receiving the Benefit of his Mercy; that is, to the Pastors of his Church, Sinners ought not to make any Exception against the Method: For tho' there be something very humbling in it, in a Sinner becoming his own Accuser, and discovering his most Secret Crimes to one, who, tho' a Pastor, is yet a Fellow-Creature, and Frail Man, like himself; yet 'tis what he must acknowledge Reasonable and Just, and of great Advantage to him. For is it not Reasonable, that a Creature should be subject to his God; and that having criminally departed from him, he should from him receive the Rule, by which he is again to return to him? Is it not Just too, that having by Pride exalted himself above God, by Contemning his Law, and Rebelling against his Precepts, he should be Humbled in his Repentance? If he acknowledges God to be his Judge, and himself the Offender, is it not

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not Just he should submit to the Conditions by him prescrib'd, for making his Peace, and again finding Mercy with him? And can he think the Condition hard or rigorous, when having Eternal Death and Hell due to his Crimes, no more is requir'd of him, but, in the Spirit of an humble Repentance, to accuse himself in private before a Minister of God, of what otherwise, to his greater Confusion, shall be publish'd, at the last Day, to the whole World? If God had requir'd some great thing, for the escaping of Hell, ought it not to have been done? How much more then, when he only say, Confess and be Clean? It is Just then, the Offender should submit to such easie Conditions prescrib'd by his Judge.

And this more especially, when, besides the Pardon promis'd, the Condition is such, as has annex'd with it the greatest Advantages to the poor Sinner, in order to his Eternal Good. Every one must be sensible, how great a Help and Comfort it is, in all Cases of Difficulty and Concern, to have an Able and Faithful Friend, with whom he may consult, and whose Advice he may have for his Direction. And I

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think it is as clear, that there is not any thing in this World of greater Consequence, or of more Difficulty, than to have an upright and well order'd Conscience ; the Concern being of an Eternal Weight, and the Difficulties being so many, arising from variety of Passions, which sometimes disguise, sometimes smother, sometimes conceal, sometimes despise the Truth, that there is no degree of Learning, Wit or Capacity, can secure a Man from Mistakes, when he undertakes to be the sole Judge in his own Case. See then the Effect of God's Goodness to Sinners, who, where he seems to punish, most consults their Good : For when he obliges them to open their Conscience to his Pastors, what is this, but to appoint them Able and Faithful Friends, with whom they may consult in their most weighty and difficult Affair ? What is this, but to put them in a Way of being deliver'd from the Delusions of their own Biass'd, Partial and Brib'd Judgments ? What is this, but to send them to such Persons, who will comfort them in their Immoderate Fears, shew them the Vanity of their false Hopes, discover to them the Danger of their unsound Principles, of their Ignorance,

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Ignorance, Sloth and Vicious Habits, and inform them of the most Effectual Means, for preventing the ill Consequences of their unhappy State? These and many other Helps the Sinner has, by observing the Conditions, God has prescrib'd to him; so that all those, who have Sense to own it a great Misfortune, to be in difficult Circumstances, where all is at Stake, and yet without the Help of a Friend must likewise own it the Effect of an Infinit Mercy to Sinners, that God has oblig'd them to have recourse to those, who in a Concern of Eternity, will give them the best Advice, and have no less than their own Salvation bound for the Advice they give.

These Truths being now suppos'd; that God requires Sinners to go to the Pastors of his Church; that they are to open their Conscience sincerely to them; that what these forgive, is forgiven in Heaven; that tho' there be some Difficulty in following this Holy Ordinance, yet that it is both Reasonable and Just, and of the greatest Advantage to Sinners, for the Pardon of their Offences, and their Direction in a Spiritual Life; these Truths, I say, being suppos'd, it ought to be the Particular

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particular Business of every Christian to prepare themselves for a due Compliance with this Institution of Christ, that so, at this time, when the Church obliges them to Fast in Punishment of their Sins, they may be truly reconcil'd to God, and find that Mercy, which they seek. But because, as in the due Performance of all Duties there are some difficulties, so likewise there are in this, such as are occasion'd by Ignorance, Sloth, or Abuse, therefore I intend here to give some Directions, which may be a Help to Penitents for the just discharge of this Duty, and that they may not be disappointed in that Good, which Christ and his Church proposes for them.

First then, all those, who think seriously of going to this Tribunal of Mercy, must remember, there are great Preparations requir'd on their part: For being there to open the true State of their Consciences, and to become their own Accusers, by making a Particular Acknowledgment of all those Sins, by which they have provok'd the Anger of God against them, and for which they now desire Mercy, they must first take time to call themselves to an Account, and by making a due Reflection
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on the time past, examin what these Sins are. And because this cannot be well done, but by help from above; therefore to prepare for making this Examination, all ought to begin with Prayer; humbly and earnestly beseeching God to grant them the Light of his Holy Spirit, that by this Help they may discover all their Sins, and be deliver'd from the Infinit Delusions of their own Passions, which otherwise will have Contrivances for disguising or hiding their Sins from them.

Having heartily beg'd the Light of the Holy Ghost, and beseech'd God to Help them in recovering the Memory of all their Transgressions, they are then, in Confidence of his Assistance, to apply their Thoughts wholly to the making their Examination; this is best done Kneeling; but if it requires any considerable time, there can be no Fault in performing it Walking or Sitting; nay, it cannot be reprobable in any Employment or Place, to turn their Minds upon making discovery of the Enemies of God, which are their Sins.

Now in making this Examen, it is not sufficient to read over those Prayers, which are set down in all Manuals, as a Preparation for Confession; for tho' these

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these may he'p to raise up the Mind towards God, and dispose it to Repentance; yet these are not enough to set before them the State of their Consciences, nor to bring to Mind the Number and Quality of their Sins; and therefore those, who, upon the Recital of such Prayers, think themselves sufficiently prepar'd, and forthwith run to Confession, have Reason to condemn their own Ignorance, and to think of doing that better, which hitherto having been ill done, they must suppose not done at all.

The thing they have to do, is to call to Mind their Sins, and what these are, they must examin, by considering, that if they were then to be summon'd before the Judgment-Seat of God, what are the things either in Thought, Word or Deed, which they have most Reason to apprehend will appear against them. Whatever these may be, they must now call themselves to an account, and resolve to Accuse and Judge themselves, that, at the last Day, they may not be Accus'd and Judg'd.

The First Point to be examin'd, are all Wilful Sins, especially such as have been in any Matter of Concern, for these being what are call'd *Mortal*; that

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that is, such as bring Death to the Soul, there is a Necessity of Confessing them, because the Life of the Soul depends on the Pardon and Amendment of them. Next after these are to be examin'd other lesser Sins, call'd *Venial*; that is, such as either have not been Wilful, or, at least in no Considerable Matter; for tho' there be no Obligation of Confessing *Venial* Sins, yet it is Advis'd, as a thing very Beneficial, and the surest Way for obtaining Grace necessary for their Amendment. But then, in considering *Venial* Sins, the Principal and Only regard is to be had of such, as are *Habitual* or *Customary*, and of such as proceed from some *Affected* or *Wilful Neglect*, or from some *Irregular Affection* to Creatures: For all these being an Argument of some Particular Disorder in the Soul, the Neglect of it must prove very Dangerous; and a Soul cannot be long safe, where such Infirmities are pass'd by, as Inconsiderable, and not worth the Care. As for other *Venial* Sins, which are the Effects of Surprize, or of that general Weakness, which is Inseparable from this Mortal State, it may be advisable for Christians frequently to reflect upon them, for their greater Humiliation,
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but not to Confess them, except in General Terms ; because the Examination of them is endless, and more likely to raise Confusion, than be a Help to Amendment of Life.

The Time for making the Examin cannot be determin'd ; those, who are to call over many Months or Years, must take longer time in their Examination ; those too, who are engag'd in Variety of Business, or Concerns, or Company, or Vicious, or Unprofitable Divertisements ; because these are generally Mixt with greater Variety of Sins : Those likewise, who have kept little or no Watch upon themselves, but have liv'd, as it were, at Hazard, without Care or Reflection. But as for those, whose Lives are more Uniform, who frequently call themselves to an Account, who are Watchful over all their Ways, or Confess often, less time must be necessary for them, because short and orderly Accounts are sooner made up.

As for the former sort of Penitents, who have been Careless, &c. it must be a Help to Examin themselves by the Commandments, and by Tables of Sins compos'd for this purpose ; and they need generally be under no fear of taking

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king too much Pains or Time in calling themselves to an Account; because much Care and Time is absolutely necessary for them, and there is but too much Reason to be Jealous, that their past Sloth and Neglect, to which they have been so long accusom'd, will Creep in here; whence, if, upon discovering some of their more obvious and greater Sins, they presently think their Work done, and desist from all farther enquiry, they may very easily, by this Neglect, make void all they do.

But as to the other sort of Penitents, who are more Watchful and Constant in this Duty; as much time cannot be necessary, so much time is not to be allow'd them for making their Examination; neither is it judg'd Convenient for these to make use of the Table of Sins, or to Write down what they remember; especially if they be of an Anxious, Solicitous, Scrupulous, Fearful or Melancholy Temper; because tho' this Method of Writing, &c. may be a great help for others, such as those above; yet to these it is not so, being most likely to make their Search endless, and so to perplex their Mind, as to render it wholly unfit for performing what they undertake. This Work can-

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not be well done, but with a Serene and Quiet Mind, and therefore these are to avoid, whatever is apt to encrease their Disquiets; notwithstanding the Violence of their Inclination, which is ever suggesting such Ways, as, in effect, are as absur'd as to put a Blind upon their Eyes, when they are to go to Search for what they desire to find.

These are Rules generally to be follow'd; but where Circumstances are Particular, there the best Direction must be taken from the Particular Advice of an Experienc'd Director; and the Fearful Christian is so much oblig'd, above all others, to follow this, that he can neither satisfy a good Conscience, nor come to any Hopes of Peace, if he does it not; and this, tho' he has the seeming Clearness of Demonstration to give preference to his own Thoughts, and Racking Fears to draw him from such Direction.

These Hints may suffice for the Examining Part, if Thou, O God, wilt please to help those, who undertake it, to Quicken the Slothful and Ignorant, to Calm the Fears of the Solicitous, to give Sincerity to all those, who having forsaken thy Ways, now think of Repentance. Thou requirest all to be taught

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taught their Duty, but except thy Grace accompany it, all Instruction is in vain.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

HAVING given some Directions for making the Examination of Conscience, now we are to go on, and make an Enquiry, Whether a Person, who has now made his Examen, and call'd all his Sins to Remembrance, be, upon this, prepar'd to go to Confession, and to make an Acknowledgment of his Sins? And to this it must be answer'd, that such a Person is not yet duly prepar'd, because it is not only requir'd, that the Sins should be confess'd, but that they should be confess'd in such a manner, as to be forgiven, and that the Sentence of Absolution be so Equitable, that what is forgiven on Earth, may be forgiven in Heaven. Now 'tis very plain, that a bare Recital of Sins cannot be sufficient for their Pardon; for then Hypocrites, and the most Perverse Sinners, only upon bringing in a Catalogue of their Crimes, might, upon very easie Terms, obtain a Discharge.

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But this is not enough ; for God nowhere promises Pardon to Sinners, but upon the Condition of a Sincere Repentance, so that whatever they do without this, it must be without Effect. If then Sinners humble themselves outwardly before the Pastors of Christ's Church ; if they lay open to them with the greatest Exactness their most hidden Crimes ; yet this cannot, in the least, contribute to the Pardon of them, if this outward Humiliation be not accompanied with a real Change of the Heart, and a Sincere Repentance of all their Sins, by which they have transgress'd their Duty, and offended their Heavenly Father. This is the Indispensible Condition God every where requites of Sinners. *If you return to the Lord with all your Hearts, 1 Kin. or Sam. 7. 3. Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, Isa. 55. 7. If the Wicked will turn from all his Sins, that he has committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is Lawful and Right, he shall surely live, he shall not die, Ezek. 18. 21. Cast away from you all your Transgressions, whereby you have transgress'd, and make you a new Heart, and a new Spi-*

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rit, Ib. v. 31. *I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way and live : Turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways; for why will you die, O House of Israel? Ezek. 33. 11. Turn to me, saith the Lord, with all your Heart, and with Fasting, and Weeping, and with Mourning; and rent your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn to the Lord your God, for he is Gracious and Merciful, Joel 2. 12, 13. Repent and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, Acts 3. 19. This is the Voice of the whole Scripture, of the Prophets, of Christ and his Apostles.*

If then God gives no Promise of Pardon, but upon the Condition of a Sincere Repentance, and a true Conversion of the Heart from Sin, to God and his Law; hence it must become an establish'd Principle with Christians; that nothing can avail to the Remission of Sin, without observing this Condition of a hearty Repentance; and consequently, that the most Rigorous Examination of Conscience, is not a sufficient Disposition for the Confession of Sins, and obtaining Pardon of them.

Besides the Examination of Conscience, there must therefore be a true Repentance of all past Sins, and a

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Heart sincerely converted to God; and till a Person has sufficient Reasons to hope, that he has this Interior Disposition of Sincere Repentance, he must not judge himself prepar'd for the Confession of his Sins; for he is no more than half prepar'd, and that much the lesser half too.

The Examination therefore of Conscience being finish'd, the Penitent is not yet to think of going to Confession, but is wholly to apply his Endeavors for raising in his Heart a true Detestation of Sin, and a Sorrow for having offended God. And because this Detestation and Sorrow for Sin, to be real, must be the Gift of God, therefore is he to ask it of God by Prayer; and this not only by repeating over such Prayers, as he finds in Books for this Purpose; for this may be done by way of Form or Custom, and with so little Thought, as to be wholly without Fruit; but he is to humble himself before God in the Acknowledgment of his Unworthiness; he is to confess all his past Rebellion, and present Weakness; he is to turn with his whole Confidence in God, appealing to his Infinite Goodness, and beseeching him to have Mercy on a poor, infirm Sinner, who has
nothing

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nothing he can call his own, but Corruption; and that since he can neither Sincerely desire Amendment, much less accomplish any Purposes of returning to him, but by his Gift, that he would now please to shew Mercy to him, by granting him a real Abhorrence of all Sin, and such an effectual Resolution of Amendment, as may bring him into the Way of his Commandments. This is he to pray for from his Heart; this is he to repeat again and again, so to importune Heaven to the Grant of his Request; and if he adds Sighs, Mourning, Fasting and Tears to his Petitions, the Occasion very well deserves it, and demands all he can do, for gaining so Important a Point.

For tho' to say over Acts of Contrition be not difficult; tho' it be not hard to have an Idea of Sorrow in the Understanding, and some Trouble upon the Spirit, arising from the Consideration of Sin, from the Fear of Hell, and of an offended God; tho' it be much easier to find a Mind uneasy, thro' the natural Difficulty of going to Confession, or through that Pride, which cannot bear the Evidence of its experienc'd Weakness, yet it is not so easie, to have a Heart so truly chang'd, as to desert

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all the Pleasures of Sin, to renounce all that Interest, which has been the Fruit of Injustice, and make Restitution to every one, that has been wrong'd; to quit all that Company, which is the general Occasion of Sin; to break off all unlawful Correspondence; to make War against its own Passions, and deny them, what with greatest Earnestness they desire; finally, to forsake all its evil Ways, and evil Thoughts, and with Violence to its Corruption, enter into the Way of God's Commandments; this is not so easie, but must be the Effect of a Powerful Grace, a Grace not to be obtain'd by any Ceremonial Forms, or Tepid Prayer, or the Spirit of Indifferency, but by the Solicitations of an Humble Heart, truly sensible of its present Misery, and manifesting, with an entire Confidence in God, its most earnest Desires of being again receiv'd by its Heavenly Father.

This Conversion then of the Heart being in it self so very difficult to Nature, and its Dependance so absolute on Grace, it is in seeking this the Penitent ought to labor, before he can hope himself to be prepar'd for Pardon, and he cannot take too much Pains in seeking it. Whence I cannot but disapprove
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their Method, who having taken sufficient time for the Examination of their Conscience, never know when to leave off, but so disquiet themselves with Scrupulous and Unnecessary Enquiries, in Compliance with the Speculations of a Restless Imagination, that they have neither Spirits or Time left for that more Essential Part of their Preparation, which is Repentance or Contrition for Sin, whereas double the Time and Labor ought to be employ'd in this, more than in making their Examen. This therefore is a Point, which these Fearful Souls ought to observe, for avoiding the Snare laid for them by their Enemy, who by a seeming Pious Solitude for satisfying the lesser Part, takes them almost wholly off from the Greater; in which, if their Labor and Solitude were placed, it would be much more to their Improvement in all that is Good.

But what is Indiscretion in these, is Criminal in others, who knowing themselves engag'd in very Sinful Practices, take time, it may be, to bring these to their Memory; and upon Recital of a short Prayer or two, presently haste to the Feet of their Confessor, as if they were now compleatly prepar'd

par'd for the Pardon of their Sins: But as for profoundly humbling themselves before God in the Acknowledgment of their Unworthiness, or laboring in the Endeavors for Contrition, and a real Change of their Hearts; or considering what are the Occasions of their Sins, and what Method they must take for beginning a new Life, and what Self-denials are necessary for mastering their Passions and evil Habits, to which they are subject; or what Restitutions are to be made, to satisfy for their Injustices or Scandals; these Points are either not thought on, or pass'd over so lightly, that 'tis plain, there is nothing serious in what they do; and hence, 'tis no wonder, their Confession is only a short Interruption, and no Cure of their Evils; and that after a few sober Faces, they soon return to the Vomit, and bring a Scandal on this Holy Institution, as if nothing of a real Repentance were requir'd in those, who come to it; whereas, it is certain, all, whatever they do without it, signifies nothing, but only to be an Addition to their former Sins.

These Abuses therefore ought to be carefully amended, and the Principal Endeavors be plac'd, in bringing the

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the Heart to a true Detestation of its Sins, and sincere Resolution of Amendment, accompanied with the Particular Consideration of all those Points, which are necessary for seeing the Fruit of it in a new Life. If these Conditions are observ'd, the Penitent may then hope that he is prepar'd, for Accusing himself of all his Sins, and that God will forgive in Heaven what is forgiven him here on Earth; since a true Repentance, and Returning to a New Life, cannot fail of finding Acceptance with God.

But then the Confession too is to have the same Sincerity, as the Repentance; all is to be Humble, Plain and Candid; no Wilful Sin is to be conceal'd, no Circumstance is to be omitted, that changes the Nature of the Sin, or particularly aggravates it; no Art is to be us'd, in wrapping up things in such obscure or dubious Terms, as to hide or disguise the Truth: But the State of Soul is exactly to be laid before the Minister of God, that so he may be able to judge of the Leprosie, to prescribe what is necessary for its Cure, and pronounce such a Sentence, as may be confirm'd in Heaven. If a Penitent goes not thus resolv'd, he had much
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better, not offer himself to this Tribunal; for that, by doing otherwise, he will abuse this Ordinance of Mercy, add Sacrilege to his Crimes, and by this provoke the Judgments of God upon him.

After a good Confession, the Care then must be to return again to Prayer, for rendring Thanks to God for the Mercy receiv'd, and for obtaining an Encrease of Grace, for putting in Execution whatever Resolutions have been made; for if these Resolutions are presently forgot, and not daily renew'd, in order to Amendment, this betrays a Want of Fidelity, and such Neglect will be follow'd with Relapses. Besides this, there must be Care, duly to perform whatever Penance has been enjoin'd, and likewise to add such others, as may be necessary for overcoming all Sinful Habits, Rebellious Passions and Neglects, and for making some suitable Atonement to the Justice of God for past Sins. But having already discours'd of this in the foregoing *Sundays*, I need not repeat it here, but conclude with hearty Thanks to God for his unspeakable Mercy in this Holy Institution, and beseeching him to make all Sinners so truly sensible of it, that they

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they may not unworthily abuse it to their Condemnation, but so duly observe the Conditions requir'd, that it may be for their Eternal Peace in the Pardon of their Sins.

Passion Sunday.

THE Time now approaching, when all the Faithful are oblig'd by the Precept of the Church, to present themselves Guests at our Lord's Table, there to partake of the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ, which he has prepar'd, under the Forms of Bread and Wine, for the Food and Nourishment of their Souls; it is now seasonable to speak something of the Preparation necessary for all those, who desire to approach worthily, and receive the Benefits of this Holy Institution.

The Blessed Eucharist, tho' infinitely Holy, for the Divine Treasure, which it contains under those Familiar and Common Veils, does not however communicate Holiness to every Soul, but only to such, who considering the Dignity of him, who offers himself to be
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their Guest, endeavour to prepare their Souls a suitable Habitation for him; to these this Divine Person becomes not only their Guest, but their Food too, communicating to them new Life and Strength, and filling them with Plenty of Heavenly Blessings. But where this Preparation is not made, there the Crime becomes proportion'd to the Dignity of the Person, whom they abuse; and Life receiv'd unworthily; becomes Death to them. So St. Paul has declar'd, *He that Eats and Drinks unworthily, Eats and Drinks Damnation to himself, not discerning the Body of our Lord,* 1 Cor. 11. 29. This Point then is of Concern; not to come to this Holy Banquet, is to neglect the necessary Means of Eternal Life; and to come Unworthily, is to incur the Sentence of Eternal Death. There is no Expedient then left, but to come to this Table, and to come prepar'd.

What these Preparations are, is now to be consider'd. One is to come Fasting; so that whoever is to Receive in the Morning, must be careful to take nothing down, either of Meat, Drink, or Phylick, &c. from Midnight forward. This the Church has ordain'd in Respect to the Holy Guest, who is

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to be receiv'd. Every one ought likewise to come Decent and Clean to this Table ; that is, in such a manner as to betray no kind of *Vanity* on the one side, or *Disrespect* on the other. But the greater Preparations concern the Inward Man.

The most Principal of these, is that a Man prove himself; and whatever he can suspect as the Guilt of Sin, that he seriously labor to Purifie his Soul, and by a Sincere Repentance, to make his Peace with God. This is to be done by Confessing his Sins with an Humble and Contrite Heart, which has been already spoke of in the foregoing *Sundays* ; but something is to be here added with Relation to the Holy Communion.

First, that the Method of all Religious, and other well Disciplin'd Houses, is generally to be recommended, which is, Of going to Confession over Night, that so the *Vigils* or *Eves*, according to the Church's Appointment, being employ'd in Fasting, Humiliation and Penance, the Holy-days may likewise follow the Nature of their Institution, and be employ'd in more suitable approaches to God, in Praise, Adoration and Love, and the time of those,

those, who are to Communicate, be more directly applied to the great Work before them. Not that Humiliation and Repentance are not very Commendable Exercises; but because the Humiliation, which belongs to Confession, has often a Perplexity attending it, and confines the Thoughts so much to the Sinner, that the Soul is not then at Liberty for considering the Infinit Treasure of Blessings in the Banquet to which it is Approaching, nor of making that more Immediate Preparation, which some more proportion'd to it.

This I give, as a General Advice; but such as may be dispens'd with, especially in such Persons, whose Scurpulous Temper is a hindrance to the good Effects propos'd in it: Tho' it were to be wish'd, that even these would Try to overcome themselves, and not let their Weakness deprive them of the greater Advantages, which they might Reap from a more settled Composure of Mind, and from a Recollection of Spirit, which has no other Object, but his Infinit Majesty and Mercy, whom they desire for their Guest. It must be likewise dispens'd with in those, whose Circumstances give them not either

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Opportunity or Time for observing this Method. If these do what they can, God will accept their Endeavors, and mercifully supply, what is wanting thro' their Misfortune. Tho' I Ad- these too, so to Contrive it, if it be in their Power, that they go not immediately from Confession to the Lord's Table, but gain some Intermediate Time, to serve as a more direct Preparation for it.

But what is allow'd by Way of Indulgence to these, must not be laid hold of by others, who find their Sins to be the Effect of some Habitual Disorder in them, such as has been strengthn'd by Custom, and is at present so powerful, as frequently to draw them under the guilt of Notorious Crimes. For tho' these, upon Resentment of their Unhappiness, may conclude a Change of Life to be necessary for them, and in order to it, may make an exact Confession of all their Weaknesses; yet I cannot think it advisable for them, to run presently from the Confession seat to the Communion; but should rather give them direction, to stay some time, before they approach to that holy Table. *First*, because it seems just, that upon the Sense of their great unworthiness, they

they should judge themselves unworthy of partaking of that Divine Food, and therefore should abide for some time in this State of a profound Humiliation, before they come to the Presence of their Lord. 2dly, Because having Reason, from their experienc'd Weakness, to suspect all their Purposes as Treacherous, it is but just, they should take some time, wherein to make Trial of their Resolutions, and see, whether they are in earnest, in the Work they have undertaken. Upon these and other like Reasons, I should Advise such Penitents to go several times to Confession, and in this time to labor in such a Penitential Method, as shall be directed to master those Passions, to break off those Customs, to seperate from all such occasions as have hitherto given Birth to their Sins. And when they have given Proof of their Fidelity in this Way, and by the Divine Assistance, made some advance in order to a perfect Victory; then, if at length they approach to the H. Communion, it is likely to be much more to their Advantage, than if with more Haste, but less Preparation, they had been admitted to it.

This I prescribe by way of Caution to these Penitents, to prevent their going

going to the Sacrament unworthily. They know, what the Penalty of this is; no less than of Damnation; and they know, what Reasons they have to suspect their own Good Purposes of Insincerity. If therefore I advise them to prove themselves, it is no more, than what they would judge it Discretion to do, in Matters of much less Concern; for who is there, that can depend with Confidence on those, who have already been False to their Trust, and very often deceiv'd them? A long Experience is necessary, before it can be Wisdom to Trust them again. Hence I say to these; be not Confident in trusting there, where you have been so often deceiv'd; Hell is threatn'd to the Unworthy; make therefore some Trial of your selves: Thus Discretion prescribes in all like Cases; and I think, presses more strongly here: But if I am mistaken, in being too Cautious, I shall easily have their Excuse, who see, it is only to prevent their Eternal Mis-carriage.

All Penitents then, according to their different Circumstances, having us'd due Endeavors for obtaining Pardon of their Sins, as likewise for disengaging their Souls from all Affection
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even to the least Disorders, and to whatever is not agreeable to the Will of God; and, by so doing, having now Reason to Hope their Peace to be made with God, they are upon this to compose their Minds, looking no more back; by way of Examination, nor having any Regard to whatever Fears are then suggested of an undue Confession; but wholly to turn their Thoughts to the great Work before them, with this One Solitude alone, of Doing it well, and excluding all other Thoughts, which cannot be admitted without Prejudice to what they have yet to do.

And here I cannot but again repeat to the Fearful and Anxious Christian, that tho' to approach with Fear, is a good Disposition for coming worthily to the Table of our Lord; yet if Fear grows to that Excess, as to Perplex and Darken the Mind, and shut out that Confidence, which he ought to have in the Infinit Mercies of his God before him, that then this Immoderate Fear is a Temptation and great Weakness, such as his Enemy Labors to improve, for preventing the more considerable Benefits, which he might otherwise receive from this Divine Food; and therefore, that 'tis his Duty to strive
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against it, and Moderate it all he can. If his Fears arise from the Apprehension of his Sin, he must oppose against them the Mercy of God, who has promis'd Pardon to Repenting Sinners, and Invites them to him; and God being Faithful to his Promises, he ought to rest with an Intire Confidence on them. If he doubts of his Repentance, he must Appeal to the Sincerity of his Endeavors, and here Hope again in God, that he will Pardon Oversights, and Mercifully Supply whatever is wanting thro' his Infirmary. If he doubts of his Confession, and has the Thoughts of other Sins still hovering about him; he must depose quietly such Doubts, by reflecting, that his present Business is to look forward, and have his Thoughts confin'd to the Holy Communion, for which he is preparing, and that therefore all Thoughts of Examining or Confessing being Unseasonable, are to be rejected as a hindrance to his present Duty.

In this manner, and by a strict Observance of his Director, is he to Labor in procuring Peace; and if all other Penitents, who are upon the same Work, could Calm all Disquiets, not by smothering the just Reproaches of their Con-

Conscience, but by the Effects of a Sincere and Hearty Repentance; this Peace would be a very considerable Step towards that Preparation, which is necessary for the Worthy approaching to this Banquet of Mercy. Grant, O God, to all the Faithful, who prepare for thy Holy Table, that they may have a true Sense of their Duty; that those, who have been Sinners, may not be deceiv'd by a False Repentance; that the Tepid Christians may not be overrul'd by Sloth; nor the Solicitous by Indiscreet Fears. Direct all by thy Grace, that the Food of Life, which is the Institution of Mercy, may bring Life to all, and not become Damnation thro' their Unworthiness.

Palm Sunday.

HAVING discours'd, last *Sunday*, of Preparations necessary for approaching to the Blessed Sacrament, we are now to go on and finish that Subject, according to the Exigency of the Present Time. When a Christian therefore has compos'd his Mind in some Tolerable degree of Peace by true Repentance;

penitance; and done this so seasonably, that he has now time wholly to apply himself, in preparing for the Holy Communion, he is to make this Preparation the general Subject of his Endeavors and Thoughts.

First, on the Evening before, when he lyes down to Sleep, he is to entertain his Heart with the Wonders of God's Goodness, to which he is invited, and let these shut out all other Thoughts. If he awakes in the Night, the same Considerations ought to stand ready, waiting for the first Admittance. In the Morning again, the same are to be recall'd, and a certain Joy mixt with Fear ought to possess his Mind, upon the Apprehension of that Inestimable and yet Dreadful Favor, which he is to receive from God that Day. Having thus turn'd his Heart towards God, and afterwards declining all Unnecessary Business and Conversation, which cannot but bring Distraction with them, with the best Convenience he is to go to his Prayers, and having Ador'd God, in Union with all the Blessed in Heaven, and beg'd his Assistance in the great Work he has to do, he begins those Prayers, which are compos'd for this purpose, as a Preparation for the Holy

Holy Communion; and no Solitude of finishing any usual Task of other Prayers, ought to put these by, but these are to take place of all. They are to be said with the best Attention, and greatest Fervor of Spirit; for that a Bare and Cold Recital of them, can be no help, but is going so far out of the Way.

But the best part of the Preparation is not to be had from Books, except only by way of Direction or Hint; but in the Interior Exercise of the Heart, taken up with such Considerations, as the present Circumstances suggest. Which may be something after this Method.

First, he considers the Infinite Majesty and Holiness of God, in whose Sight the Angels are not Pure, and before whom the Pillars of Heaven Tremble,

2dly, He gives a general Glance at at his own unworthiness contracted by his Infinite Neglects, by his Ingratitude, by the Number and Foulness of his Sins.

3dly, Upon this he Humbles himself, Confessing, that he deserves to be forever banish'd from the Sight of God, and stands surpriz'd at his own Presumption,

sumption, in waiting to Receive his Lord.

4^{thly}, Thus considering God and himself, he fears; and cannot but Tremble at the Thought of so unworthy a Sinner making so near an approach to God; he thinks 'tis more fitting, he should hide himself, or, like *Jonah*, flee from before the Face of God.

5^{thly}, He calls to Mind the Infinit Goodness and Mercies of his God; how much he has done, how much he has suffer'd for Sinners; with what Solitude he has sought them, with what Love he invites them to him.

6^{thly}, Upon this Prospect he recovers his sinking Spirits, and raises a Confidence in God; resting with an Intire Hope in him, that he, who has so abounded in Goodness, as to provide this Banquet for the Help and Comfort of Repenting Sinners, and call'd them to it, will Pardon his Presumption, and mercifully receive him, who in all Humility obeys his Call, and offers himself a Guest to his Table.

7^{thly}, He falls down and adores this Infinit Goodness, which he sees in God, invites all the Blessed above to adore with him, and bless his Holy Name; and protests, that he has no Confidence in

in himself, nor in any he can do, but only in the Goodness of God alone.

8^{thly}, He considers the design of God's Goodness in this Institution of Mercy, and hence begins to hope, that since God has so ordain'd it, he shall from this Food of Life receive New Life; that being Miserable and Weak, he shall here recover Strength; that he shall be rais'd above his former self, and by the Help of Divine Grace be prepar'd against all Assaults, and for a more Faithful Discharge of all Duties.

9^{thly}, With this Hope he puts himself forward, and professes to God, that he comes to him, as one Infirm and Sick to his Physician; as an Undutiful Child to the Bowels of a Tender Father; as an Unhappy Wanderer to a Faithful Guide; as one in Distress to a Powerful Protector and Friend; as one Perishing thro' Hunger to a Plentiful Table; finally, as a Wretched Sinner to his Merciful God. And then begs, that God would graciously look upon him, and dispence his Blessings to him, according to his Wants.

Lastly, he again Humbles himself, at the Consideration of the little he has done to prepare himself; begs Pardon for all Neglects, and manifests

this

this his Desire at least; that in whatever manner he comes short of what he ought to do, his most earnest Desire is, that all were so duly prepar'd within him, that his Breast might become a worthy Mansion for his Lord.

In this manner the good Christian endeavors to prepare his Soul, that when his Lord comes, he may find it adorn'd, and a welcome Habitation in it. Those, who can but apprehend, how great an Advantage there is in such a Preparation, must likewise be sensible, how much they wrong themselves, who carry on Thoughts of a Scrupulous Examination, and Immoderate Fears, even to the Foot of the Altar, and scarce, for a short Moment, have their Minds at liberty to think of this better Part. 'Tis a Weakness, and I hope God will forgive it; but certainly they are great Losers by it. Now if Exceptions be made against this kind of Preparation, as not fit for all, especially those, who have no Order in their Thoughts, when their Book is laid down; I will not so much as pretend the contrary, but I ask, whether this be an Exception against this Method of Preparing, or rather against those, who know not how to use it? It must be certainly their Fault, who know not how to think,

where they have so large a Subject for it, and, it may be, know how to give full Entertainment to their Thoughts, as well as others, when the Subject is not of God. I cannot therefore but hope, that Practice will take off the Difficulty with those, who are not too lazy to make the Trial. But however, where it cannot be, yet the Soul ought to be possess'd with the same Sentiments, before it approaches to the Holy Communion; and if it be done by the Help of Books, let it but be done, and there needs be no Exception against the manner of doing it.

When the Christian has taken Pains and Time thus to prepare his Soul, and 'tis now time to draw near to the Altar, he lays by whatever can be a Hindrance to himself or others, as Hat, Sword, Gloves, &c. and then, with a suitable Composure of Mind and Body, goes up; and having express'd a Reverence to the Altar of God, kneels down, and takes the Linnen Cloth. When the *Confiteor* is saying, humbly bowing down, he joins with it in the Confession of his great Unworthiness. When the *Absolution* is given, in the Spirit of Contrition he desires it may be to him the Forgiveness of all the Remains of Sin. When the Priest

Priest turns to him, with the Blessed Sacrament in his Hands, and saying, *Domine, non sum dignus. Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my Roof; say but the Word, and my Soul shall be heal'd.* He ought to bow down with the Humility of the Centurion, and then let a Sincere Confidence in God follow his Distrust in himself. Then kneeling upright, with his Mouth moderately open'd, he is to receive the Blessed Sacrament on his Tongue, and quietly swallow it down, without bending his Head, nor raising the Towel to his Lips.

This whole Action he is to perform with a great Composure of Mind, with his Heart fixt on God by Faith, Hope and Love; and when the Towel is taken away, he is then to return again to his place, there to give Thanks. And here now he is to turn his whole Thoughts to that Divine Guest, whom he has within his Breast; he is to entertain him with his most hearty Thanks; he is to admire and praise his Infinite Goodness, in coming to visit so Poor and Unworthy a Creature; he is to represent to him all his Infirmities; then offer his Petitions to him, that he will please to heal his Wounds, give him Strength for overcoming all his Weaknesses, give him Patience under

all his Troubles, confirm and establish him against all Assaults of corrupt Nature, the Devil, and the World, and for being Faithful in every Duty. Here again is he to renew all his Resolutions, and beg Grace for the exact Execution of them. Finally, he is to beseech him, not to depart, without leaving the Blessing of a manifold Grace behind him. This Exercise, for such as are able, is best perform'd without the Help of Books, which others however are encourag'd to use, who cannot do so well without them.

But as for those, who after Communion huddle over a few Prayers in haste, and turning their Back upon the Altar, presently leave the Place; this seems the ready Means to lose the Benefit of all they have done; for it betrays so little a Sence of God's Mercy to them, that little can be hop'd of Fruit from these barren Hearts, which, like bare Rocks, throw off the Seed that falls upon them. Extraordinary Accidents or pressing Business may sometimes break off this Exercise; but those, who understand their Duty, will soon contrive some Opportunity, for taking it up again. Bating such Accidents, this Haste ought to be no where allow'd; and if any have this ill Custom,

it will be a seasonable Charity in such as observe it, to give a Hint of it to those, who may put them upon a better Method.

After a due Thanksgiving, the rest of the Day ought to be well employ'd; with a particular Interdict of all those Diversifements, Company and Conversation, which at the best are Unprofitable, and generally are the Occasions of Sin. But 'tis not this Day only, but every Day is to be under a more than ordinary Guard: For the Design of this Sacred Institution being to communicate to Men, not only a Passing Holiness, but a New Life, even the Life of Christ; it is the Christian's Duty to manifest this Life, and shew, that Christ now abides in him. This is his Duty, after Communion, and therefore he ought not now to live according to the Corrupt Spirit of the World, or according to the Directions of his own Passions, or of Sin, but according to the Spirit of Christ, with the Charity, Humility, Patience and Obedience of Christ, so that it may be now true in him; *Now not I live, but Christ lives in me.* This is the Principal Fruit of the Holy Communion; and if it is what ought to be found in all, how much are all those to blame, who having perform'd the Action, think nothing of the Fruit, but

presently return to the Track of their usual Neglects and Liberties, without the least Argument of Christ abiding in them? O Jesus, how many are they, who partake of thy Sacred Body and Blood, and yet partake nothing of thy Spirit! They have certainly reason to suspect themselves, who find no Help in Thee. I know thy Judgments are unsearchable, and that thou concealest the Effects of thy Grace sometimes, even in those, who are most Faithful to Thee. But this cannot be their Case, who are neither careful in Preparing, nor watchful after they have receiv'd the Bread of Life. O God, grant to all, that believe in Thee, a better Spirit. Give them a true Sense of their own Misery, and a true Sense of thy Mercy, that they may in earnest desire Help, and so seek it, as to obtain it. Grant, they may no more abuse thy Mercies, but that as often as they receive the Food of Life, it may be to them an Encrease of New Life; and that as thou hast promis'd to abide in them, so thy Life and Spirit may shew it self in all they do.

Easter-

Easter-Day.

This Day is a Yearly Memorial of Christ arising from the Dead, being the Third Day after his Suffering on the Cross for our Redemption. All those, who know, that Christ, on this Day, arose to a New Life, even a Life Immortal, and that he was not now to die or suffer any more, must in this discover, what Christ and his Church expect at this time from all the Faithful; to wit, that they should arise to a New Life, by endeavouring to quit all that Corruption, to which they have been hitherto subject thro' their own Fault. Christ is our Head; if he be risen, it cannot become us, who are his Members, to lye still in the Grave of Death; *He arose for our Justification*; the Effect then of his Resurrection is to be found in us; and this Effect is, that we be Justified: And are we Justified, as long as we are in Sin? Are we Justified, as long as Corruption commands our Heart and our Life, contrary to the Will and Law of God? No, as long as we are under these unhappy Circumstances, Justice, Righteousness and Grace have no Part in us, we are not Justified;

stified; the Effect of Christ's Resurrection is not found in us; we may Celebrate this Festival as the Heathens do the Feasts of *Bacchus* or *Adonis*, in good Cheer, Jollity and Dancing, but the Mercy of it is not extended to us; and what is this to say, but that, tho' Christ has undertaken our Redemption, has given his Blood the Price of our Ransom; tho' he is now Risen for our Justification, yet nothing of this Mercy has reach'd us; we are still in the same Slavery, as if Christ had done nothing for us.

Christians, I do not say this to the Reproach of any, but for your general Instruction, to inform you, how much it is your Concern at this time, to resist all Evil, and, by a Victory over Sin, to partake in the Triumphs of Christ. Not that I expect of you, an Exemption from all Kinds of Weaknesses, or that there shall be nothing of Infirmary found in you; this is more than belongs to this our Unhappy State; I know there is nothing you can do, but what has a Mixture of Imperfection in it, and that in your most Vigorous Endeavors of approaching towards God, you must expect the malicious Attempts of that Corruption, which you bring with you into the World. To be free from this is the Privilege

viledge of that Change, when this Corruptible Body shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal Body shall put on Immortality ; but at present, in this State of Banishment, both the Faculties and Affections of the Soul are deprav'd, and being link'd to a Corruptible Body, we are bound with Patience to bear the weight of our Slavery ; and tho' we may with Tears of Submission lament, yet we cannot wonder at our Misfortune, but by forgetting where we are, and expecting more than is consistent with our unhappy Circumstances.

But however, tho' it must be look'd for in this State, to feel the Effects of our Corruption, in being inclin'd to Evil, and disturb'd in all that is Good ; yet to favor this, which makes our Unhappiness to be consenting to it, to promote it, and willingly to seek, and be pleas'd with the Satisfaction of it, this is the thing, which is never to be allow'd in a Christian, and has such a particular Disagreeableness in it at this time, that whoever the Christian is, that lyes under this Disorder, he ought to have a Horror of himself, and without delay undertake such a Method of true Repentance, as may give him Hopes of arising from this State of Death.

For this end it is the Church, knowing the Necessity either of Innocence, or of a Sincere Repentance, for partaking, at this time, of the Effects of the Redemption, wrought by Christ, lays a general Command on all, of approaching, at this time, to the Holy Communion; that all making now their Peace with God, none may be excluded from the Mercies of their Redeemer, but may keep an *Easter* of Joy, in joining with Christ in his Victories over Sin. Happy therefore are those Christians, who, following the Design of the Church, have kept such a *Leht*, in doing Penance for their Sins, and making War against all those Disorders, to which they have been subject, that now they have solid Grounds to hope, that they join with Christ, in Arising to a New Life. Such as these keep a true *Easter*, and may expect in the Holy Communion, to have the Spirit of Christ Communicated to them.

But as for those, who have neglected this Summons of the Church, and still find themselves under the unhappy Engagements of Sin, this is not an *Easter* for them; for what have Slaves and Captives to do in the Triumphs of a Conqueror? What have those to do with the Joys and Allelujahs of Victory, who are yet

yet under the weight of wilful Chains? Those, who are in the Interest of the Enemy, and are still Confederates with him, have their Reproach and Confusion in the Jubilees of the Conqueror, who has triumph'd over him. And this is their Unhappiness, who at present are under the Bonds of Wilful Sin. These therefore, if they are so much their own Friends, as to propose any Good for themselves, have more Reason to think of beginning now a *Lent*, than keeping an *Easter*; that part of *Lent*, at least, which consists in a Faithful Engagement against Sin; and in laboring to suppress those Seditious Passions, which are at the Root of all their Disorders.

If these Christians would undertake, and for some time pursue this Method, they would sooner come to their *Easter*, in Arising with Christ, than now to prepare for a hasty Confession, and then thrust themselves in Guests, at our Lord's Table, in Compliance with the Precept of the Church; for tho' they seem indeed to satisfy the Precept, yet they are so much farther from their *Easter*, as they have now the greater Guilt upon them, as 'tis to be fear'd of an Unworthy Communion. 'Tis true, the Command of the Church presses all the Faithful with that
Strict

Strictness to come, at this time, to the Holy Communion, as to threaten Excommunication against all such, as observe not this Order; yet it cannot be imagin'd, that the Church, which, as a Pious Mother, desires the Good of all, should oblige the Unworthy to Damn themselves in Compliance with her Law; but rather, that such as know themselves unprepar'd for so divine a Mystery, thro' an ill Habit of Sin, should manifest their Case to the Pastors, the Church, and from them obtain some time for a more solid Preparation. The general Dispensation granted to all Catechumens, or such, as are not yet duly instructed, in allowing them more time to prepare for the Communion, is Demonstration enough, that she desires none to come unprepar'd to it, and discovers her Inclinations for granting them also more time, if the Sense of their present Unworthiness, and the Sincere Desire of putting themselves in a better Condition, would be their Motive of asking it.

The thing then I propose at present is, that Christians, at this time, when they should be most Holy, be careful, not to be most Wicked, by approaching to the Blessed Sacrament, when they are Conscious of such Interior Indispositions, as

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cannot be brought to the Altar, without contracting the Guilt of a Sacrilegious Communion, but that they would rather ask Time for making a better Preparation. And what I propose, as to *Easter*, must with more Reason be understood of Communions at other times of the Year, when no Precept of the Church urges; and with a special Regard to those Places or Families, where the Pastor not residing, but coming at such particular and appointed Times, 'tis expected, that, when he comes, all should go to the Sacrament, and look'd upon as Scandalous in those, who approach not to it. Now here is an Awe upon all Persons; and how obvious is it for some Tempers, in these Circumstances, rather to go unworthily to the Altar, than venture the Constructions, Remarks and Enquiries, that must be expected, upon their Abstaining from it? Here then a Custom, Piously begun, becomes the Occasion of Unworthy Communions, and Pastors have not the Liberty of giving such Prescriptions, as the Circumstances of Persons may require.

Upon which Consideration, I cannot but advise Pastors to break off this Practice, and put their Flock upon a better, by informing each part of it; That to go

to the Holy Communion out of Custom, is not to be approv'd ; that for performing this Duty well, many Dispositions are requir'd, which all have not at all times; that it may be sometimes to their greater Spiritual Advantage, to go oftner to Confession, than to the Holy Sacrament; that hence it ought not to be expected, as a thing of Course, that every one, who goes to Confession, should at the same time receive; that hence it ought to be no Matter of Scandal or Enquiry; that some, who have Confess'd, come not to the Communion; that such Persons ought not, upon this, to be suspected of being in an ill State of Conscience; for that not only Sin, but the Desire of greater Perfection, besides many other Reasons, may be the Occasion and Motive for so doing; and therefore, that such, as make ill Constructions of Persons, upon this Account, are guilty of rash Judgment. These Reasons may suffice for changing this Practice: And those, who know, that all Consciences are not alike, must see that the same Management cannot be proper for all; and that to have one Rule and Practice for all, must necessarily be follow'd with many Inconveniencies, and most weighty Abuses; this being to put such a Tie, both upon Pa-
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stor and Penitent, that neither is at liberty of doing what is most proper, according to the Exigency of Circumstances, but they must be restrain'd by the Absurdity of *What is expected*, a Method most unworthy of Spiritual Conduct.

I add no more, for this Day, on the present Subject, but only my most earnest Petition to Holy Jesus, the Author of this Mercy; that as he has been pleas'd to ordain, for his Faithful, a Table, for the Refreshment and Food of their Souls; so he would likewise, by the Effect of the same Goodness, so prepare his Faithful, that they may be worthy Guests for this Banquet. It is an Adorable Mystery, where Mercy so abounds; but what then must their Misery be, who abuse this Mercy to their Condemnation! Prevent this Evil, I beseech thee, and let not the Wickedness of Man any more make void the Ordinance of thy Goodness.

Easter-Monday.

THE Church Precept obliges all the Faithful at this time to come to the Holy Communion; and tho' I have plead-
ed for their Dispensation, whose Sinful
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State is a Barr to their approaching worthy Guests to this Table, that so they may have Opportunity of being better prepar'd; yet ought not to be taken up by any, in favor of Tepidity, Sloth or Neglect. For since the Command of the Church is pressing, these cannot put off the Compliance, but with the Guilt of Disobedience and Contempt; and if they thus draw upon themselves her Censures, the Complaint must not be of her Severity, but of their own Careless Humor, which rather chuses to sit still, than take one Step forward, even when it is commanded to step towards Heaven. It is the Church has commanded, and it is God commands them to obey; if they know the Command, it is their Duty to obey; if they obey not, they rebel against God and his Church, and for their Disobedience, are cut off from both: If they comply Externally with the Command, but are Interiorly unprepar'd, Sacriledge is their Crime, and Damnation is pronounc'd against them. These are unhappy Circumstances; but they come to be only their Misfortune, who know and foresee them, and will not take Pains to prevent their falling into them; and what is this to say, but only, that they alone are thus unhappy, who make it their
Choice

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Choice to be so? The Precept of the Church then is to be observ'd, because God will have his Church obey'd; and since all know, that to approach to the Altar unworthily, is to be guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ, the greatest of all Crimes; therefore all know it to be their Duty, to make such a Preparation, as is necessary for worthily partaking of the Holy Mysteries; if this be not done, it can be esteem'd no less, than Abusing the Church, and Mocking God and their own Souls; and to what Account it will turn, may be easily concluded, when it is thus given in short; that not to be esteem'd Disobedient, they become Sacrilegious.

Hitherto of the Precept of the Church and *Easter-Communion*, to which all are oblig'd, whether in Health or Sicknes; so that those, who are not able to go to Public Assemblies, where the Sacred Mysteries are dispens'd to the Faithful, whatever their Impediment be, must desire to be help'd at home, by those, under whose Care they are. But however, when Christians have satisfied this Duty, they must not imagin, that now they need think no more of going to the Holy Communion, till the next Year again: For tho' the Church has laid no Command,

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mand, but only of going once a Year, and that at *Easter*; yet this is not sufficient for them to conclude, that they do well, if they do what the Church requires, and that they cannot be reprov'd, if they go no oftner. For tho' the Church-Precept obliges only to the *Easter-Communion*, and it cannot be reasonably expected, that the Prelates should oftner take an Account of their whole Diocess; yet this Law seems only as a Restraint upon those Careless and Loose Christians, who are in Danger of forgetting their whole Duty, and becoming Reprobates, if they were not thus aw'd with the Severity of Censures: And accordingly we see, the Church looks upon this, as the Extremity of what is to be tolerated, and judges those, who comply not with this Order, as not worthy to be esteem'd her Members, and cuts them off from her Communion. And can any now think, that 'tis enough, not to be Reprobates, and to live so upon the Brink, as to escape her Censures, and not to be thrown out? This indeed is strictly look'd into; but can it be suppos'd, that no more is requir'd?

This Law, 'tis true, requires no more, which is intended for preventing Reprobates; but does the Church require no more?

more? 'Tis certain, she requires more; she requires all to live Piously and Holily; she requires all to work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling; she requires all to seek first, and before all things, the Kingdom of God and its Justice; she requires all to be watchful in the Business of their Salvation, to resist Evil, to be Industrious in Fighting against the Devil and the World, to put off the Man and his Works, and to live according to the Spirit of Christ. But where is the Command for this? God himself has given this Command, the Church publishes it, the Church presses it, the Church conjures all to observe it; and 'tis not Excommunication only, which is threatn'd to those, who despise or neglect it, but a Separation, from God, and Eternal Death.

Let not then Careless Christians sit down under a false Peace, and say, We have complied with the Precept of the Church; we have done our Duty; there are none now can bring us into question. For what; Is there but one Law, which you are to observe? And if you have observ'd that one, is there no other Guilt, which you are to apprehend? Tell me; have you not a Law within you, writ in your Hearts by the Fin-

Finger of God, which commands you to worship and serve One only God, to do his Will, and keep his Precepts? Have you not a Law within you, which requires you to stand against all Evil, to do Good, to provide for an Eternal State, and to be every Day prepar'd for it, as not knowing, but that every one, that comes, may be the last? If you have this Law, are you not to keep it? And if you cannot keep it of your selves, are you not bound to seek Help, where it is offer'd you? If you have Faith, if you have Reason, you know, you are oblig'd to this. And is not Christ your Help? Has not he left his Body and Blood for the Food of your Souls? Is there not in this Holy Ordinance both Grace, and Life, and Strength? Is not this the Comfort in Peace, the Shield in War? The Support of the Weak, the Guide to the Traveller, the Light to the Blind? If then you know your selves to be miserable, and weak, and wounded; if you know your selves subject to the Extravagancies of many Sinful Passions, and that you are so far from being provided for Eternity, that if Death should now seize you, the Surprise could not be separated either from Despair or Presumption; if you know this to be your Case,

Case, can you go on Careless or Unresolv'd, without seeking Help, where God offers it, and yet think your selves Innocent, and that you Offend against no Law? You Offend against Reason, you Offend against Faith; your Lying still unconcern'd in an unsafe State, is Rashness; your not making use of the Helps, which God has ordain'd for rescuing you from Eternal Evils, is Madness, 'tis Infidelity, 'tis a Contempt of Salvation, an Abuse of Mercy, and Obstinacy under the Threats of his Severest Judgments. These are your unhappy Circumstances, and yet you can sit down with the Satisfaction of having complied with your Duty, and that you are not now questionable upon any Law.

In this may be discover'd their Fault, who performing their *Easter-Duty*, are Careless at other times in going to the H. Communion. For if a Neglect be Criminal in Temporal Affairs, when they are part of our Charge: If it be Criminal in a Person to Neglect the Common Preservatives of Health, and thus become unserviceable, when the Good of his Children depend upon his Labor: If it be an Injustice to let an Estate run to Waste, for want of Ordinary Care, when the Family has no other dependance for their Provision

vision or Support; if it be Injurious to the Subject, not to make up Breaches, when the Enemy presses, but to Expose them to Plunder and Violence: It may easily be understood, where the Crimes is, when Christians lying open to all these Misfortunes in their Soul, neglect the Holy Communion, which is the most Sovereign Preservative of Spiritual Health, the best Security against the Poverty of the Soul, and the surest Defence against the Enemies of their Salvation.

Hence all those Christians, who know, how great their Charge is in all these Particulars, must see it to be an Indispensible Duty in them, to have frequent recourse throughout the whole Year, to the Sacred Table of our Lord, from thence to seek Help in all their Spiritual Necessities. For since the Necessities of the Spiritual Life are very Many, the Duties very Difficult to Corrupt Nature, and the Dangers Infinit; since Man is Weak, and of himself Incapable of standing under these Necessities, of satisfying these Duties, of escaping these Dangers; and God has offer'd himself for his Help in all these Ways, and by a wonderful Effect of his Goodness, has, in the Blessed Eucharist, prepar'd for him a Constant Supply of Grace; does not the Christian

stian see, that he renounces all the Principles of Reason and Faith, if, encompass'd with so many difficult Circumstances, and no less than Eternity depending on his Management, he stands still, and either despises or neglects the Help provided for him by the Excessive Bounty and Mercy of his God? Is it not plain, if he perishes for want of Help, it is his own Fault, that he perishes? God may truly say, *Quid ultra potui facere vinea mea, quod non feci?* What more could I do for my Vineyard, than I have done? What more could he do, than give himself a Sacrifice for the Sins of Man, and give himself likewise for their Food? Does not this discover so great a Desire for the Salvation of Man, as if the Sole Interest in it were of God, and not of Man? But what can Man say, if, having the Mercy of God inviting him to an Eternal Inheritance, and his Almighty Power engag'd, in providing Means for the Accomplishment of this Desire, Man regards not this Banquet of Mercy, but diverted by Vain Satisfactions or Sloth, chuses rather to carry the Weight of his Corruption, and to perish at last thro' the Extremity of Want, than to seek Comfort and Refreshment from that Table, which Christ has appointed for his Relief?

The Good Christian will not do
 thus,

thus, but will run to Christ, the Fountain of Mercy and Grace ; if he finds his own Weakness, he goes to him for Strength ; if Trouble Oppresses, in Christ is the Return of his Comfort ; if the Enemy Threatens, Christ in his Shelter ; if the Thoughts of his Sins Deject, is Christ is his Hope ; if nothing of these give Disturbance, yet the Knowledge of God being his only Good, makes him hunger after Christ, and most earnestly desire to be United to him. For these Reasons, his Life, Health, Strength, Security, Comfort, and Love, being Center'd in Christ, he frequently presents himself a Guest to the Table of our Lord, where his Soul Possessing his Redeemer, his Hope, and Joy, is rais'd in Proportion to his Goodness, who stoops so low to become his Helper. Thus all Christians ought to do : And add now, O Jesus I beseech thee, this other Effect of thy Mercy, that all, who profess thy Name, may understand, how great is thy Goodness to them in this Institution of thy Infinit Love to Man, that whereas the Miseries, Darkness, Dangers, and Infirmities of this Life are above the Help of Nature, they may not perish thro' their own Neglect, but seek Relief from thee.

Easter-Tuesday.

HAVING shewn, how great is the Mercy of Jesus in the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist, and that the Love, which is due to him, and the Necessities of this unhappy Life, in which we are, ought to oblige all Christians to frequent this Holy Table; now we are to enquire, what Rule may be observ'd in this Particular, and how often it may be advisable for them to present themselves Guests to it.

In this Matter no one Rule can be fram'd, which can agree to all: The most general, and that, which, with greatest Security, may be follow'd, is, that every one advise with an experienc'd Director, and observe his Orders; because the Resolution depending upon the different State and Disposition of each Soul, those must be best qualified for giving it, to whom this Disposition is best known. However some General Rules may be given, which may serve for some direction in this Matter.

First, Those, who are in the State of Mortal Sin, ought not to approach to this Table. Amongst these must be reckon'd all such, as seem outwardly to Repent, but in their Hearts are not Sincere, nor truly resolve to forsake their Sins, or separate

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them.

themselves from the immediate and usual Occasions of them. Those likewise, who do not yet resolve upon making those Restitutions, which in Justice they are oblig'd, and is an Obligation contracted by their former Sins. Those again, who have knowingly conceal'd any Mortal Sin in Confession; for this being an Abuse of the Sacrament, and a kind of Sacrilege, it is to be esteem'd a State of Sin, not only for the time, when they Conceal it, but likewise, as often as they afterwards go to Confession, without declaring what they omitted, and accusing themselves of such a Sinful Omission. The Reason of all this is above declar'd; because to go to the Communion in the State of Sin, is to go unworthily; and the Effect of this is Damnation, if not prevented by a sincere and timely Repentance.

2dly, Those, who have liv'd any time in the State of Habitual or Customary Sin, such as are too often the Sins of Intemperance, Impurity, Injustice, &c. ought not regularly, as has been said above, to go to the Holy Communion, upon the first Resolutions of a seeming Repentance, but are rather to take some time for the Trial of their Repentance, to see, if by bringing forth good Fruit, they can have just Grounds for hoping it to be Sincere.

This

This is reasonable, because the Motions of the Heart, in the Point of Repentance, as in many others, are very Doubtful, especially in those, who, by a long Adhesion to Sin, have made a Real Conversion very difficult to them; and therefore it is not Rashness, but Prudence, to suspend all Judgment of them, till some Substantial Proofs can be produced, in favor of their Sincerity. This is the Method Wise Princes take with those Subjects, who have been once Rebels; if there be Motives for Pardon, upon Remonstrances of their Submission; yet they are not presently made Favorites, or put into Places of Trust; except by Signal Services, and a Long Experience of their Fidelity, they first give unquestionable Proof of their Fidelity. This same is the Method of Discretion in other Cases of lesser Moment, as of Friends, Stewards, Servants, who, if they have been evidently False to their Charge, are never admitted again into Trust, upon the First Expressions of Repentance. If this be reasonable in these and all other like Cases, ought not a like Award be pass'd here? That when a Christian has for any time liv'd in Rebellion against his God, it cannot be according to the Dictates of Common Prudence, for him to judge himself, or be judg'd by any other,

fit presently to be admitted to the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, which is one of the greatest Arguments of Christ's Love to Man, and the Bond of strictest Friendship with him.

3dly, Those, who have often come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and still bring with them the repeated guilt of the same Mortal and Habitual Sins, ought not to be admitted to the Holy Communion, upon owning their Fault, and declaring their Purposes of Amendment; except they can manifest the Sincerity of these Purposes, by the Pains they have taken, and the Means they have us'd, for overcoming those Evils, to which they are subject. The Reason is; because, where Purposes are made, and so soon forgot, that very little or no Care is us'd for the Execution of them, there is too much Reason to judge, that such Purposes are not Sincere, and consequently the Repentance no better than Counterfeit; and this cannot be a Preparation for the Worthy Receiving Christ's Body and Blood. When Christians therefore, by such Neglects, have already given too much grounds for doubting of their present Resolutions, 'tis reasonable to expect some Proof of their better Disposition now pretended. And if at the next Presenting

senting themselves, they can prove their Sincerity, by having been Faithful in the Endeavors of Amendment, so accordingly they may be admitted to the Communion, altho' they are not Totally exempt from a Relapse. Because it is not every Return of Sin is enough to question the Sincerity of a past Repentance, and doubt the present.

4^{thly}, Those, who have liv'd under a general Neglect of Christian Duties, or have perform'd all with such Sloth and Indifferency, that they cannot reasonably be judg'd to have been serious in whatever they have done, are not presently to be permitted to partake of the Sacred Mysteries, upon their first Proposals of doing better, till they can give Proof of their Sincerity, because a long Habit in an ill Way is enough to doubt of a suddain Change.

A General Ground of these Points thus resolv'd, is taken from the Nature of their Charge and Commission, who undertake to be Directors of Souls. For as the Priests of the Old Law were constituted by God Judges of the Leprosie, and none infected with it were to esteem themselves Clean, till the Priests, by the Marks given them, had fram'd a Formal Judgment of them, and pronounc'd them so:

So the Priests of the New Law are appointed by Christ Judges of the Spiritual Leprosie, which is Sin; and none are to be esteem'd Clean, or prepar'd for those Sacred Mysteries, for which a Clean and Pure Heart is a Necessary Disposition, till these have so judg'd them. Priests then, by their Commission, are to frame a Formal Judgment of their Penitents, and this Judgment is to be Rational and Just; they cannot suppose them Clean, except they have sufficient Motives to judge them Clean; and they cannot have sufficient Motives to judge them Clean, when all Circumstances being consider'd, and the whole Evidence being summ'd up, they have so many Reasons to question it, as would make a Suspension of Judgment, in any other like Case, the most Favorable Sentence, that could be pronounc'd. And this being the very Direction, which God gave in the Old Law; that the Lepers should be shut up Seven Days, after they gave Hopes of Recovery, if there yet were found Marks in them sufficient to doubt of their being not Clean, *Levit. 13.* the like Method seems most Rational in the New Law; and I cannot but fear, there is great Rashness in pronouncing, by an Absolute Sentence, those Penitents Clean, in whom there is much stronger Reasons
for

for questioning their being so ; and when Suspending Judgment for a time would be much more agreeable to the Demands of Justice, and rather Advantageous to Penitents, than Prejudicial to them.

But this must not be understood of the Hour of Death, when no time can be allow'd for a Trial. Then the Penitent must be believ'd, and if he Protests, that he sincerely Repents, the Judgment of it must be left to God, and the Priest, if he discovers no Essential Indisposition in him, must admit him to all the Rites of the Church ; this is an Indulgence necessary at that time ; and the Penitent must answer for it, if he abuses the Piety of the Church, which denies nothing in those Streights, that can be helpful to him, if he appear but fitted to receive help from it.

As for all other Christians, who fall not under the foregoing Heads, they are to be encourag'd to go frequently to the Communion, that from it they may receive those great Advantages, Christ has mercifully provided for them.

It must be advisable for all, who are engag'd in Worldly Business, as Professors of the Law, Physic, Traders, Dealers, Servants, &c. to go generally once a Month : Because all these having Varie-

ty of daily Distractions, which lessen in them the Concern of Heaven; their Desire of coming to that Place of Happiness, and doing the Will of God, cannot well be, what it should, if by such approaches to this Heavenly Food, they are not Sollicitous to regain new Strength for standing against all the Dangers of Life, and to recover a new Spirit, for preventing the return of those Failings, to which they have been subject, and advancing still nearer God.

Masters and Heads of Families ought to be particularly exact in this Duty, that their Example may be an Encouragement to all under their Roof.

Those, who are disengag'd from the Distraction of Business, if they gratefully Correspond with their Happy Circumstances, and apply their leisure to the Service of God, are to be encourag'd to be more frequent in this Exercise. But if they are so forgetful of their Benefactor, as to abuse his Gifts to the Improvement of their own Vain or Idle Humor, then I fear, they fall under some of the Exceptions above-mention'd, and instead of this Encouragement, are rather to be judg'd Unworthy, till they have chang'd their Method, and put themselves in a better State.

Those

Those Christians, whose Life is regulated by good Disci-
plin, who faithfully attend to the Business of their State,
who give Labor or Recollection the preference to all Unnecessary and Vain En-
tertainments, who daily Lament all the Weaknesses, to which they are subject,
endeavor daily to overcome them, and desire a still stricter Union with their God,
these, I say, may be encourag'd to Receive every *Sunday*, and if their Devoti-
on extend farther, it ought not to be denied them. But the Determination of
this must be left to their Director; who knowing the Particular Dispositions of
each Penitent, is best able to advise, and his Advice is their best Rule; and
therefore as these shall direct, so I desire all to submit; this Submission being much
better than to follow Private Inclinations. And here I conclude this Subject; adding
only this Petition to Almighty God, that he would please to grant both to Pastors
and People a Heart and Understanding, such as may comprehend, so far at least, the
greatness of this Mystery, as to strike them with the Horror of all Abuses of it, and pre-
pare them for Receiving the Fruit of it. O God! What a Provocation must it be, when
those, with whom thou hast entrusted thy Mercies, expose them to the Prophan-

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nation of the Unworthy: And when the Faithful so abuse thy Goodness, as to make thy greatest Mercies the increase of their Judgment! Remedy this Evil, I beseech thee, O God; and may all so partake of this Heavenly Food, that it may be to them Life Everlasting.

Feast of S. Andrew, November 30.

THere are many things in this Apostle proper for our Instruction in a Christian Life; but having already discours'd of these in another Part, I will not here repeat them, but make choice of one Passage related in his Life, for ushering in a Lesson, which can never be unseasonable.

S. Andrew, being commanded to Sacrifice to the Gods, so to prevent the Sentence of a Cruel Death, made this Answer: I offer a Sacrifice every Day to the One True God, not the Flesh of Oxen, or the Blood of Goats, but a Spotless Lamb upon the Altar, whose Flesh when all the Faithful have Eaten, the Lamb, who has been Sacrificed, is still Alive and Entire. Thus it is related by the Priests and Deacons of

of *Achaia*, who being Witnesses of his Trial and Martyrdom, recorded what they had heard and seen. These Words of the Apostle plainly signifie the Sacrifice of the Altar, which was then, and is now daily offer'd, and is call'd the *Mass*; and this being the most Solemn Worship of the Catholic Church, at which the Faithful are daily present, it is the Common Duty of all, both Learned and Unlearned, of whatever Capacity or Condition, to understand it; that so they may be no ways wanting in paying that Sovereign Homage, which is due from all to God, who is the Sovereign Lord of all. For this end I propose the following Instructions.

First, the Worship of God has ever, from the beginning of the World, been perform'd by Sacrifices offer'd to him in Testimony of his Supreme Being. This the Holy Scripture declares in *Abel*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, &c. before the Written Law; and afterwards more fully, when God having given the Law to *Moses*, and in the Seed of *Abraham* distinguish'd a Chosen People to himself, he appointed the Order of Sacrifices, that were to be offer'd to him; these chiefly consisted in the bloody Sacrifices of Birds
and

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and Beasts. The Old Law being abolish'd, these Sacrifices were abolish'd with it, and Christ himself became the Sacrifice of the New Law, who was Figur'd by all that had been offer'd before him. He offer'd himself once a Bloody Sacrifice on the Cross for the Sins of the World; and that he might become the Only and Perpetual Sacrifice of his People to the end of the World; he Consecrated at his Last Supper Bread and Wine, being a Priest according to the Order of *Melchisedech*, and under those Elements gave to his Apostles his own most Sacred Body and Blood; giving to them, and to their Successors in them, a Commission and Power to do what he had done, that is, to Consecrate Bread and Wine into his Body and Blood, and offer it a Perpetual Remembrance of his Death, *Do this in Remembrance of me.*

Thus have the People of the New Law their Sacrifice, by Christ own Institution, even the Body and Blood of Christ, the same that were offer'd on the Cross; but now not on the Cross, but a daily Memorial of it, under the Forms of Bread and Wine. So that as the *Manna* reserv'd in the Ark, was a Standing Memorial of the *Manna*, that God

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God gave to the *Israelites* in the Desert; so here Christ offer'd under the Elements of Bread and Wine, is a Standing Memorial of Christ offer'd on the Cross; and so lively a Remembrance to a Soul that loves her Redeemer, that all others are but Liveless and Empty Shadows in Comparison of this.

Hence if it be ask'd, what the Mass is? The Answer is obvious: It is the Consecration and Oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ under the Forms of Bread and Wine. Christ himself is the Sacrifice of the New Law; this Offering is made to God alone: The Priests, the Successors of the Apostles, are the Ministers of it; the Power is of God; these Offer it to the Eternal Father, not only for themselves, but for all that are Present, and join with them in making this Offering. It is offer'd as a daily Remembrance of Christ's Death and Passion; and both to Priest and People is a daily Oppportunity of giving Sovereign Homage and Thanks to God, and obtaining all Blessings of him.

Christians Pay a Worship to their God, when they Bow down, and in Spirit Praise and Adore him: But how inconsiderable is this, if compar'd to
that

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that greater Homage given him, in the Oblation of his Only Son, an Offering of Infinite Value, and in whom he is well pleas'd? It is something for Man to Honor God; and yet this Honor of Sinful Dust, how must it be esteem'd as nothing, in Comparison of Christ Jesus, true God and Man offer'd to him?

Christians give Thanks to God for all his Blessings; but what are all their Thanks, if compar'd to that, where Christ himself is the Thanksgiving-Offering?

Christians beg Pardon of their Sins, and Pray for Mercy; but how much more Effectual must their Petitions be, when the Lamb of God is upon the Altar before them, and is made their Sin-Offering; when they lay him before the Eternal Father, and all that he has suffer'd for them?

Christians Pray for Increase of Grace, for New Blessings both for Body and Soul: And how does the Presence of Jesus add Life to their Prayers? How does it raise their Hope, when they have not only their own poor, worthless Prayers, but even Jesus himself, to offer to God, and be their Advocate in all their Necessities?

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These and many other like Advantages have both Priest and People in this Offering, which is daily made of Jesus upon the Altar; even the same, which they might have had, if, with the B Virgin and other Disciples, they had been present at the Foot of the Cross, when Christ hung a Bleeding Sacrifice on it; since this is not a Different, but a Continuance of the Same Sacrifice, tho' in another manner, under the Forms of Bread and Wine. Hence may the Faithful easily apprehend, that the most Advantageous way of Assisting at this Holy Sacrifice, must be, in joining with the Priest, and accompanying him in all he does, who is the Minister of it; and that to say other Prayers at that time, which have no Relation to the Sacrifice, that is offer'd, is not so agreeable to the Institution, and cannot therefore be so Beneficial to them. Hence again may those of the Faithful see, how much they wrong their own Souls, and are wanting in their Duties to God, who know little of what the Priest does at the Altar, and take no Care to understand it.

And is it expected then, that all should understand it? How can this be, since the Mass is said in a Tongue unknown

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to the generality of the Common People? They know nothing of *Latin*; how shall they understand, what is said in *Latin*? The Objection must be own'd, and the appearance of a great Absurdity, which it carries with it; and yet, notwithstanding, it is expected, that all should understand the Mass. For tho' it be said in *Latin*, yet it is of that Nature, that the Unlearned, and Persons of a very Mean Capacity, and even those, that cannot read, and Children, with a little Use, Moderate Pains, and some Help, may be, in a short time, brought to understand it. Matter of Fact is the best Proof; for tho' there be some of so Careless a Temper, that they apprehend little of it; yet it is Matter of Fact, that the Generality even of the Unlearned and Common People of both Sexes, and of all Conditions, understand it so far, as to join with the Priest, and accompany him in all he does at the Altar.

One great Help to this, is from Books, which having the Mass in *Latin* and *English*, shew to every Ordinary Reader all that the Priest says and does at the Altar; so that tho' the Priest says it in *Latin*, yet every one, that hears Mass, may read the same in *English*. Another

great Help, is, that the Mass is not a Form of Prayer read to the People, as 'tis thought generally by those, to whom the Absurdity seems so great; but 'tis a Sacrifice offer'd to God, by the Priest, at which the People are to assist; and in this being several Actions distinguishable to the Eye, and every day the same, these are easily, and in a few Days remark'd by an ordinary Observer; and a little information of what these are and signifie, gives soon light to the whole; so that even those, that cannot read, may, by this means, be taught, in Spirit, to accompany the Priest in all that he performs at the Altar. In this manner, the most unlearned are capable of understanding the Mass; so that tho' it be in *Latin*, yet it cannot be said, they Pray in an Unknown Tongue, since they have it in their own Language, and being instructed in all that is done, they Pray not only with their Spirit, but with their Understanding too. And this is not only in the Mass, but likewise in other Parts of the Church-Service, as *Vespers*, *Litanies*, *Office of Holy Week*, which are in *English*, for the Help of those, who understand not *Latin*.

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But what Reason is there, that the Mass should be said in *Latin*, since it is the Common Worship of the Church, not only for Priests, but likewise for People? There is this Reason for it; First, that, as the Church and its Faith is One, so it is fit its Worship should be One; by which Means every one of the Faithful may be capable of serving God, and joining with the Church, in whatever Nation they come: Which they could not so well do, were the Liturgy in the Particular Language of every Nation. But now certainly as it is, it must be own'd, not only a great Convenience, but likewise a Matter of Edification, to see People of all Nations, tho' divided in Interest and Government, and not understanding one another, yet still United in one Faith, and in the same Assembly giving Worship to the same One God, whom they Adore. Then Secondly, the Mass being in *Latin*, which is a fixt Language, it is not expos'd to the Diversity of Translations, nor to those Alterations, to which other Languages are subject; whilst every Age undertakes to refine them. Thirdly, *Latin* is the most Universal Language of the *Western* World, and therefore it is reasonable, the

the Worship, which is common to the Faithful of all Nations, should be perform'd in the Language, which is most universally understood : And this Solemn Worship being of that Nature, that it may be understood even by those, who know nothing of *Latin*, the Objections commonly advanc'd against it, are in this remov'd.

In this is answer'd what is objected from *S. Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 14. For whereas he reproves Prophecyng or Preaching in an Unknown Tongue, it is what the Catholic Church likewise reproves with him ; all her Sermons and Instructions being deliver'd in the Vulgar Language of every Nation, which the People speak and understand. And whereas he advises all to Pray with the Spirit, and to Pray with the Understanding, in this likewise the Church concurs with him ; since the Liturgy, tho' in *Latin*, is interpreted, as he directs, to the People : And while they have it in their own Language, with every part of it expounded to them, it is certain, they may if they will Pray both with Spirit and Understanding. And if any in particular Pray in a Language Unknown to them, tho' in this the Understanding is not edified, nor others, who

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who stand by ; yet still this has so far the
 Approbation of the Apostle, that he says,
 such *Pray in Spirit*, v. 14. and *give*
Thanks well, v. 17. But this however is
 not the general Method propos'd to
 the Faithful ; since all have their Prayer-
 Books in their own Language, for
 performing their Private Devotions,
 and for joining with the Priest in the
 Public Liturgy of the Church. And all
 being thus in the Hands of the Faithful,
 and in their own Language, it cannot
 be, with Justice, laid to the Church, that
 she hides her Service from the People,
 and purposely keeps them in Ignorance.
 And now, O Jesus, I must turn to
 Thee, with a grateful Acknowledg-
 ment of thy Mercy, in the Institution
 of this Holy Sacrifice, where, all the
 Antient Figures being abolish'd, Thou
 art the Lamb upon the Altar, and the
 Only Sacrifice of the New Law. Those,
 who Love thee, know how great a
 Treasure they have in this Offering,
 where thy Presence enflames their Love,
 strengthens their Hope, and gives them
 such Confidence with the Father, that
 they cannot but expect Mercy, whilst
 Thou art their daily Sacrifice to him,
 who is to grant it. Prayers are always
 good, but how short do all Prayers
 come

come of this Offering, where our Hearts ascend not to the Father without Thee. Grant, that all may assist at this Sacrifice with an Attention answerable to the Dignity of it, and that Ignorance and Incredulity may be Molest at least, and not Blaspheme what they do not understand.

Candlemas Day, *or, The Purif.*
of the B. Virgin. *February 2.*

ON this Day, when, the time being accomplish'd prescrib'd by the Law, the B. Virgin went to the Temple to be Purified, and to Offer the Infant Jesus to our Lord, as the Law of Moses requir'd, the First Instruction is to Mothers, after Child-bearing, to go to Church, not now to be Purified; for that was only a Ceremony of the Old Law; but to give Thanks for their safe Delivery, and to make an Offering of their Children to God, recommending them to the Divine Protection, and beseeching God to preserve them by his Grace, amidst the Infinite Dangers of this Life, and bring them at length to the Inheritance of his Kingdom.

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dom. This Practice however, of Women being Church'd, is not now enjoin'd them, by any Precept, as it was in the Law of *Moses*; and therefore the Omission of it is not to be esteem'd a Sin, except it be accompanied with Contempt or Ingratitude: But it is a Pious Custom, which is very commendably observ'd. The proper time of performing this Devotion, is the first Day they come to Public Prayers after their being Deliver'd; tho', if by any Accident, it be then omitted, it may be well done another Day; neither is there any Fault or Indecency in Hearing Prayers, before this Ceremony is perform'd.

The Interior Dispositions of those, who are to be Church'd, may be easily known from the Consideration of the End, for which they ought to desire it. For since it ought to be, in Gratitude to God for their safe Delivery, they ought to have their Hearts rais'd to God, and join with the Church, in giving Thanks for this Mercy: And since the Child has a part in the Blessing, and is incapable of acknowledging it, they are to do it for him, and beg such a Continuance of Blessings upon him, that, as he is now, by Baptism,

tism, become the Child of God, so he may abide for ever. The Lighted Candle put into their Hand, is an Emblem of this Disposition of their Hearts, which, with an Inward Flame, ought to be rais'd towards Heaven, and likewise teaches them, what their Gratitude ought to be; not in Words or Ceremony only, but more in Life, by such exactness of Christian Disciplin, that their Light may shine before Men, and glorifie their Father, who is in Heaven. For in Public to acknowledge Blessings receiv'd from God, and afterwards to live so, as if they had receiv'd nothing from him, nor were to give any account to him of what they receive, is a Wilful and most Perverse Ingratitude.

A Second Lesson for this Day may be taken from the Ceremony of Blessing the Candles, from whence it has its Name of *Candlemas-Day*: And if from this Occasion I give some account of the Practice of the Catholic Church in Blessing Candles, Water, and many other Inanimate Things, I believe it will be both welcome and profitable. What therefore may be the Reasons for Blessing these things?

A First Reason is, because 'tis Decent and Fitting, that whatever things are

are set apart for the Service of God, should be offer'd, and in a Particular manner Consecrated to him; that so being distinguish'd from other things, they may be respected, as Things belonging to God, and no more be put to prophane Uses. Thus we see, that because Churches are built for the Worship of God, tho' their Materials are no other than those of Ordinary Dwelling-Houses, as Timber, Brick, and Stone, therefore there is a Particular Blessing, by which they are Consecrated to God, and set apart for this Holy use. So there is for Church yards, because they are to be the Burying-place of the Faithful. So there is for all the Vessels and Vestments, which are Appropriated to the Worship of God, and the Service of the Altar; and so likewise for Candles, which are design'd for the same use.

A Second Reason is, that God may give a Particular Blessing to such things, as are thus Consecrated to him, that those, who use them with a Faith in his Name and Power, may find his Assistance against Temporal and Spiritual Evils, and against the Snares of the Devil. Few doubt, but the Devil makes use of Creatures against Man; he did it a-

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gainst *Jeh*, by raising a Storm, and overthrowing the House, in which his Children were Feasting; and *S. Augustin* shews at Large in his Book of the *City of God*. l. 18. c. 18. what Ways he has, by Meats and Drinks, to Injure Man; as those unhappy Wretches also do, who by Compacts and Charms, abuse what is most necessary to him, and likewise by his Power make such things Medicinal, as of their own Nature, have no such Virtue in them. Now those, who have as much Faith in God, as others have in the Devil, may easily apprehend, how, by the Blessing of God and Prayer, the same Creatures may become Sanctified, and receive a Power above that, which Nature gives them, for repelling the Devil, preventing his Designs, and working good Effects both for Body and Soul. The Scripture affords sufficient Proof of this: First, in *St. Paul*, 1 *Tim.* 4. 5. where he says, *Every Creature is Sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer.* 2dly, In *S. Matthew* c. 23. 17, 19. where Christ shews the Pharisees, that the Temple and Altar were Holy, and Communicated Holiness and Sanctification to such things, as were offer'd on them, or applied to them: *Ye Fools and Blind;*

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which is greater, the Gold, or the Temple, that Sanctifies the Gold? Which is greater, the Gift, or the Altar, that Sanctifies the Gift? Did not God himself likewise Sanctifie One Day of the Seven, by Appropriating it to his Use and Service? And were not Places also Sanctified by the Presence of Christ, so that *Thabor*, on which he was Transfigur'd, is call'd by *S. Peter*, the Holy Mount, *2 Pet. i. 18.* as the Ground was declar'd Holy, where God spoke to *Moses* from the Burning Bush?

3dly, From *S. Mark 6. 13.* where he relates, how the Apostles Anointed many Sick with Oil, and Heal'd them.

4thly, from the *Acts of the Apostles c. 18. v. 12.* where it is recorded, that Handkerchiefs and Aprons, that had Touch'd *S. Paul's* Body, Cur'd Diseases, and Cast out Devils.

Now if we Recollect from these Places of Holy Writ; that Inanimate Creatures may be Sanctified; that being Sanctified they are capable of Healing Infirmities, Casting out Devils, and Working Effects above Nature; and that they are Sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer; hence it may be understood, why the Church, by the Word of God and Prayer, Blesses Candles,

dles, Holy Water, &c. It is, to oppose the Power of God against the Power of the Devil; it is, to hope for his Protection in time of Spiritual or Temporal Danger; it is, to depend on God for help, and not only on Nature, for the Cure of Diseases. So that as Sorcerers, Enchanters, and all that use Charms, depend on the Devil's Help, which is expected by Covenant; and as Artists depend on the Power of Nature and Art only; so the Church teaches her Children, not to tempt God, by expecting Miracles, but to make use of Nature and Art, as he has ordain'd, and to seek his Blessing by Prayer, and by the Use of such things, which being Sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer, they may have Reason to Hope, will be a Terror to the Devil, and a Help to obtain the Blessing of God upon them. These things therefore, that are Bless'd, do not lessen the Christian's Confidence in God, nor take off his Dependance from him; but rather help to raise his Heart with Admiration, Praise and Faith towards God, who has given him such Helps, and by whose Power alone he knows they can be Helpful to him.

These are the Principal Reasons, why the Church appoints many things to be Bless'd, and these the Motives, why Christians in all past Ages and at present use them. If then, in time of Thunder and Lightning, they light Hallow'd Candles, it is with the Hope, that having been Bless'd by the Word of God and Prayer, they may, by the Blessing of Heaven, and Power of God, be a Protection against the Malice of Evil Spirits, who being the Rulers of this Darkness, as the Apostle call them, have often a part in such Storms, in turning them, at least to the Mischief of Man. If Bells are Rung at the same time, it is because these likewise are Bless'd for the same End, *ut Spiritus procellarum & aeris potestates prosternantur*, that in Virtue of such Blessing, the Spirits of Storms, and the Powers of the Air, may be Chaced away. If Holy Water is us'd against Charms and Evil Spirits, if it be taken in Time of any Infirmary, if at the Entrance into the Church, if at Going to Bed, or in any Danger, it is because it has been Bless'd for these Ends; and if it be taken in the Name of God, and with a Faith in his Power, the Effect of such Blessing may be justly expected, in being a
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Protection from Evil; especially since it has the Authority of the Primitive Church, even from the First Age of Christianity, and so many wonderful Effects above dispute in all Ages to commend the use of it. Again, if *Agnus Dei's* are us'd, as a defence against Evil Spirits, it is because the Wax of which they are made, has been Bless'd, and by Prayer, and the Word of God, has been Sanctified for this End. So of all other things, of which the use is the same amongst the Faithful. They are all in a particular manner Consecrated to God, and his Holy Name is invoked upon them, that to such, as use them with a Faith and Confidence in him, they may become Helpful to them against all the Malicious Attempts of their Enemy. And is it not commendable to use things belonging to God with a Confidence in God?

Besides these, many other things are likewise Bless'd; as Bread, every *Sunday*, which is distributed amongst all present; this is the Custom in some Places, and is mention'd by *S. Augustin*, as a Practice in his time; this the Faithful Eat together, and Send to one another, as an Argument of their Mutual Charity, and 'tis not the Sacramental

Bread. There is a Blessing for all other things, that are of use, as for Houses, Cloaths, Corn, Cattel, &c. on which God's Holy Name is Invoked, that his Blessing will Accompany those, that use them. There is a Blessing again for New Croffes, and the Images of Christ, &c. wherein the Church Prays, that they may be Helpful to the Faithful, for the encrease of Faith and Good Works, be a Comfort and Protection to them against their Enemies, and that such as Pray and Honor God before them, may find his Protection both for Soul and Body. In this manner the Church, as a Pious Mother, makes her best Interest with God, that whatever is for the use of her Children, may, thro' the Divine Favor, be a Comfort and Help to them. O God, amidst the many Dangers, with which we are here encompass'd, I own it to be a Comfort, to have any thing, that belongs to Thee. Thou hearest the Prayers of thy Church, for so thou hast promis'd, and thou givest Benediction to whatever is Bless'd in thy Name. My Confidence is in thee, and while I expect Help from thy Creatures, I confess the Power and Vertue is wholly thine, whether it be from Nature or from Grace.

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It is the Devil's Malice to abuse thy Creatures against thy Servants; but 'tis the Effect of thy Mercy, that the same Creatures being Sanctified are made their Helps against him.

St. Mathias, *February 24.*

ON the Feast of this Apostle, who was chose to fill up the Place of *Judas*, not by Favor, or the Interest of Friends, or by Soliciting, or the Offer of Money, or any thing else that is valuable amongst Men, but only by Prayer, and the Indication of Heaven, we have a great Lesson to the whole Church, of the Method to be observ'd by all concern'd, whether Ecclesiastics or Laics, in the Presentation of Persons to Church Dignities, by whatever Title or Degree they are distinguish'd. But having already discours'd on this Subject elsewhere, upon the Festival of this Apostle, the Repetition cannot be seasonable. Here therefore I only beg of all the Faithful, that as they have a Concern in the Good of the Church, of which they are Members, so they would join, this Day, in their most

earnest Petitions to God ; that he would mercifully look upon his Church, and give to every Pastor and Member of it the true Spirit of the Gospel they profess, and that Proportion of Grace, as is necessary for them in their Respective Stations: That he would take from all that Wicked Spirit of Covetousness ; but more in Particular from those, who have any Right of Presenting to Church Dignities ; that these may no ways be Influenc'd by Interest, Favor, Affection, or any other Worldly Respects, in the Choice they make ; but follow the Method of the Apostles, in Soliciting Heaven to direct them to those Persons, who are best qualified, for the just discharge of each Respective Function ; that so, God being consulted in the Choice of those, who are to be the Ministers of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, he may have the Choice of his own Ministers, and all those be excluded, who being of a Mercenary or Worldly Spirit, have no other Motive in seeking a Commission of Jesus Christ, but for their own Private Ends, and often to promote an Interest against him. This is a Point of great Concern, and those, who concur not here, in making an Interest with Heaven, are Un-natural

natural and Blind ; since the Good of the whole Body so much depends upon it, and there is no other disorder, from whence National Judgments in the overthrow of Religion, are more justly to be dreaded, than from this.

Having made this Petition, I leave this Subject, and turn to some others, tho' still under the same general Head, wherein all of the Apostolic Function are concern'd in some degree or other, either in giving Occasion to the Scandal of a Covetous and Worldly Spirit, that is laid to their Charge, or, at least, in bearing some part of it from their Censures, who take every thing in the worst Sense, or, by an unjust Comprehension, from the undue Practices of some, spread the guilt to all of the Character.

The first Scandal is that, of Forgiving Sins for Money. This, if regard be had to the Doctrine of the Church, is wholly Unjust and Groundless ; since there is no one Point taught by her, which can give the least Color for this Aspersion. Her Positive Doctrine is, that there can be no Pardon of Sin, but from a True and Sincere Repentance ; that without this Repentance, giving Sums of Money to Priest,

Bishop or Pope, is no more to the purpose, than throwing it into the Sea; that there is no Power of the Keys, either in Bishop or Pope, reaches to the Pardon of Sin, but only upon the Condition of a hearty Repentance. Hence I must declare, there is no such Practice in the Church, as sending Money to *Rome* for the Pardon of Sin, nor of giving Money to Priests for this Effect. Where there is Repentance, every Approv'd Priest can give Absolution, and where there is no Repentance, Money can no more open Heaven Gates at *Rome*, than in any other Place.

But what then may be the Occasion of this Scandal being thus advanc'd against the Church? One may be, because in the Grant of Indulgences, one general Condition requir'd for obtaining the Benefit of them, is, Giving Alms. And yet this is generally left to every one, to give it, where they shall judge it most necessary; and is not applied by the Brief, but in Case of some Public Calamity: And then it is not for the Pardon of Sin, but for the release of some Temporal Penalty: As if the Penalty of Standing in a White Sheet in the Church, should be releas'd by the Bishop, upon the Condition, of

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Distributing so much Alms to the Poor : And this is only an Exchange of the Penalty, and not Giving Money for the Pardon of Sin.

Or, 2^{dly}, From the Charge of obtaining Dispensations from *Rome*, as in Case of Persons desiring to Marry, who are within the degrees of Kindred forbidden by the Church ; or of requiring other Grants, as in Case of Excommunications, or other Censures. But all this Expence is no more than Fees to Officers, such as are usual in all Bishop's Courts, and not for the Pardon of Sin.

Or, 3^{dly}, From a Custom, which some Persons have of Giving something to the Priest, after they have been at Confession. This, I must own, has the looks of Paying for Absolution ; when, in reality, it is no more than giving a Charity to him, for the Help of his Subsistence. It is ill-tim'd to give it then ; but how can they help it, who scarce see the Priest at any other time ? However, since such an ill Construction is put upon it, it were to be wish'd, that those of the Faithful, who are willing to give their Charity, would not offer it at that time ; and that Priests would refuse what is then offer'd ; but however this Practice is of no great Extent, since I never heard of
it

it in Catholic Countries, where Pastors are provided with Benefices; and is done here, but by very few, where their Subsistence depends on the Voluntary Contributions of the Faithful.

A Second Scandal is occasion'd from giving Money for Masses to be said for them, who give it, and for Praying for Souls departed. And in this not only Priests, but also some of the Laity are concern'd, as may be seen in many Foundations of Colledges, Hospitals, &c. where there is an Obligation left of an yearly Observation of *Obits* for the Founder's Soul, as in our Universities; and in other Places, of leaving a Maintenance for so many Beads-Men or Women, who are to say so many Prayers every Day, for the same Intention. This cannot be disputed, as to Practice, since it is General; and it cannot be denied, but that it has the Looks of *Simony*; since to take Money for any thing, that is Spiritual, is the Crime of *Simony*; and therefore, there is no wonder, if it be reproach'd as such, by those, who judge by appearance, and are willing to take every thing in the worst Sense.

But what better Construction can be put upon it? The Scripture leads to a better Construction, which condemning

demning all Simonical Contracts, yet Approves and Commands the Giving of Alms, not only to the Laity, but also to Priests, and expressly requires a Provision for their Subsistence. First, Christ prescribes it, Luke 10. 7. where sending his Apostles to Preach, and requiring them to go without Scrip or Purse, and Unprovided of all things, he bids them depend on those, to whom they Preach, For the Laborer, says he, is worthy of his Hire. 2dly, His Apostles prescribe it. Let h'm, that is taught the Word, Communicate to him, that teaches, in all good things, Gal. 6. 6. Who goes to Warfare, at his own Charges? Who planteth a Vineyard, and Eats not of its Fruit? Or who Feeds a Flock, and Eats not of the Milk of the Flock? Say I these things, as a Man, or says not the Law the same also? For it is Writ in the Law of Moses; thou shalt not Muzzle the Mouth of the Ox, that Treads out the Corn. Does God take Care for Oxen? Or says he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is Written; that he, who Plows, should Plow in Hope; and he that Threshes, should Hope to have part in it. If we have Sown to you Spiritual things, is it a great thing, if we Reap your Temporal things? Do you not know, that they, who Minister in the Temple, Eat of those things, which
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are of the Temple? And they, who serve the Altar, are partakers with the Altar? Even so has our Lord ordain'd, that they, who Preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel, 1. Cor. 9. 7, &c.

Now this being the Ordinance of God, not only in the Old Law, but likewise in the New; it can be no matter of just reproach to the Priests of it, to receive help from their Flock; and where can the Fault be, if, when the Faithful come to desire their Prayers, they, at the same time, offer them an Alms, so to contribute to their Subsistence? This is no more than what S. Paul says, of *Partaking with the Altar*. Upon this then is grounded the Practice of the Faithful, as to whatever they give to the Pastors of the Church, whether for the Burial of the Dead, Marrying, Christening, Preaching, or in desiring their Prayers for the Living or the Dead. And as this ought to be the Intention of those, that make Offerings to them, to Contribute to their Necessities, that being thus assisted, they may not be Solicitous for the things of this World, but as 'tis said, 2 Chron. 31. 4. *ut possent vacare legi Dei*, may be wholly intent upon the Law of God: So it ought to be the Pastors Inten-

Intention, in what they receive from the Faithful; not to take it, as the Price of their Functions; for this would be to set a Price of Money upon what is Spiritual; it would be unworthy of their Profession, Mercenary and Simony: God is their Portion, and from him is to be expected the Reward and Price of their Labors. *Accipiant sustentationem Necessitatis a populo, mercedem dispensationis a Domino.* So it is declar'd in the Antient Council of *Aquisgran* or *Aix*.

Hence it must be nota Crime, but a Duty in the Flock, to see, that their Pastors be provided with all Necessaries, so to prevent in them all the Occasions of a Worldly Solitude. And it cannot be reprobable in Pastors, to receive whatever Offerings are made them for this End; nay, it may be often Pride to refuse a Mite from the Poor. But however, Pastors, upon this, are not to exact Money from their Flock, upon the account of Funerals, Marriages, or Christenings, &c. nor to refuse the performing these Offices to those, from whom no Money can be expected; for this Spirit of Avarice is abominable to God, and in many Councils condemn'd by the Church, with this Threat added to the Prohibition; *Let him, who*
does

*does otherwise, in the Day of Judgment, receive his Portion with Giezi. Conc. Her-
bip. An. 1287. This is what S. Peter
requires of all Pastors: Feed the Flock
of God, which is among you, taking Care
of it, not by constraint, but willingly, ac-
cording to God; not for filthy Lucre, but
freely with a ready Mind, 1 Pet. 5. 2.*

But now, while Pastors may receive the Offerings of the Faithful, let those, who want none of their Help, being otherwise plentifully provided, consider, what is their Obligation, as to whatever they receive. For if the design of such Offerings, be not for a Reward, but only for a Maintainance, and these want it not, they can be suppos'd to receive it for no other End, but to Distribute it again to the Poor. For, if they keep it, as a Reward of what they have done, this is a degree of Simony; and if it be employ'd, not in things Necessary, but Superfluous, this is an Abuse of that Piety, with which it was given: What then is to be concluded; but that such Ecclesiastics are only the Administrators of what they receive, either from the Church, or the Faithful, and have no Right of applying it to themselves?

Thus

Thus is to be understood what is charg'd as a Scandal upon Church-Men, and thus may be remov'd those Scandals, which are given by the Avarice of some, and the Extravagant Expences of others. But while the Method is Plain, it is thou, O God, must be the Giver of that Grace, by which this is to be effected: Grant it, I beseech thee, and let not thy Church suffer from those, whose Duty it is to watch over it, and preserve it.

St. Joseph, *March 19.*

ON the Day of this Saint, chosen by Heaven to take Care of the Son of God made Man, and his Virgin Mother, all Christians, of whatever Condition they be, have Reason to join in giving Praise to God, for the many Priviledges of Grace bestow'd on him, and in begging Grace, for receiving those Instructions, which he gives them.

All Traders and Professors of Mechanic Arts have Reason to rejoice, in seeing One of their degree made choice of for so Honorable and Divine a Charge, and from him may have the Assurance,

Affurance, that from their Shops they may be Translated Saints to Heaven, if with his Piety, Fidelity, and Justice, they endeavor to satisfy the Obligations of their State, and by this Care shut out from their Shops, all those Corruptions of Sloth, Covetousness, and Injustice, to which Custom have given Authority, contrary to the Law of God, and the Rules of the Gospel. But to these I have spoke already in another Place, upon this Festival.

2^{dly}, Virgins have here an Example, that Commends the Excellency of their State, and shews them, how grateful they may be to God, and distinguish'd by Singular Priviledges of his Love; if keeping their Minds undefil'd, they chuse Christ for their Spouse, and Consecrate all that of their Solitude and Love to him, which in other States is too generally given to the World.

3^{dly}, Those of the Married State have here a Patron; and tho' his Continency cannot be prescrib'd to them; yet if they exceed not the Bounds of what is permitted; and exclude all those Liberties, which nothing but a Brutal Passion suggests, and are so far from being Priviledg'd by their State, that they

they can no where be excus'd from Sin: If this Conjugal Chastity be strictly observ'd, and they, otherwise are Watchful in all the Duties of their Place; Husbands and Wives supporting each other in all the Necessary Condescendences of Honor, Love, and Virtue; Careful and Discreet in the Education and Disposing of Children; Exemplar in Family-Disciplin; Faithful in the Management of what is for the Common Support, without letting Sloth, Vanity, or Extravagance consume, what their Industry ought to improve; if these Obligations be duly discharg'd; upon the Motive of the Divine Will requiring it, and all be season'd with a Piety becoming their State, it cannot be doubted, but they may Work out their Salvation amidst their endless Difficulties, and prepare to be Companions with this Saint in Glory.

If these Conditions be observ'd, there is no State of Christians, but what may help to furnish Heaven with Saints; but then these Conditions (I cannot help repeating them again) must be observ'd. For, *First*, since nothing, that is defil'd, can have Admittance into Heaven, there is a Necessity, that every Christian be Watchful
against

against all, that can defile, and strict in the Observance of that Chastity, which belongs to their State ; for that, whoever they be, that transgress these Bounds, and indulge themselves in the Practice of Sinful and Brutish Liberties, it is certain, they are not in the Way of Salvation ; and that whatever Prayers they say, whatever Charities they perform, tho' in all other Particulars they have the appearance of Saints, yet all will avail them nothing, if this Vicious Practice be not reform'd.

adly, If all be exact in this Point, and a modest Reserve excludes whatever is capable of being censur'd ; yet, if the Particular Duties belonging to each State be not satisfied ; if Young Person, shews a Contempt of their Parents, and are Rebellious against them ; if Servants are not Faithful to what they undertake ; if Traders live in the Practice of Injustices ; if Married Persons live in Dissention and Hatred ; if Parents give not Christian Education to their Children, nor have Regard to Salvation in disposing of them ; if Heads of Families Neglect the Discipline of their Houses, if they give ill Example, and look not into the Ways of those who are under their Care ; if
Magistrates

Magistrates are not Solicitous to do Justice ; if Masters of Families, by Sloth, Gaming, Intemperance, or other Vice, are drawn from their Business, which is to be their present Support. and future Provision ; if Persons of Estates, by the same Ways, or any other Extravagance, are so Prodigal in their Excessive Expences, as to Waste their Estates, so as not to be in a Capacity of Paying their Debts, and to expose their Wives and Children to the Miserable Inconveniencies of Want ; if thus, I say, Christians are wanting to the Particular Duties of their State, whatever their Religion or Devotion otherwise be, it is of little Concern, for they are certainly in an ill Way, and nothing but a Sincere Repentance, attended with the Change of Life, can prevent their Eternal Ruin.

The Reason of this is obvious enough ; because in whatever State a Christian, the Particular Obligations of it are such, as God has impos'd upon them ; so that tho' they have no Immediate Regard, but to Creatures only ; yet in as much as God has Annexed these Obligations to their State, and commands all to be Faithful in them, a Wilful Neglect and Transgression of such Obligations,

tions, is not only an Offence against Man, but likewise carries with it the Guilt of Infidelity and Injustice against God. This is clear from the Positive Injunctions deliver'd by *S. Paul*, in his Epistles, to Christians, according to the different Circumstances of their Condition; and tho' the Persons mention'd in the last Place, those, I mean, who Waste their Estates, are not express'd by the Apostle, yet the Criminal Occasions of such Waste are all condemn'd by him, as Sins Inconsistent with Salvation. And when the Crime of those, who have not a Care of their Families, is declar'd by the Apostle, to be worse than that of Heathenism, *1 Tim. 5. 8.* I think they may in this see their Character to be more Infamous than any of the former; and that as long as they hold on in that unhappy Method, they cannot, without the help of a deceitful Flattery, entertain Hopes of meeting a better Lot, than to be Cast out with Heathens.

Thus the Doctors of the Faculty of *Paris* have, in effect, deliver'd their Opinion of these Prodigal Christians, who in *The Resolution of several important Cases of Morality*, Printed *An. 1666.* thus declare their Sentiments; *Art. 5.*
Curates

March 19.

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Curates are oblig'd, not to admit those to the Sacraments, who are Immoderate in their Expences, and live above what they have, till they have us'd Endeavors for Paying their Debts, and Retrenched their Expences, so as not to exceed their Revenue; and this without having any regard to the Reasons they bring. The same Severity is to be us'd to those who Pay not what they owe to Tradesmen, or oblige them to take what they think fit, for fear of losing the whole.

In these Words these Divines deliver their Sentiments; and their Learning is such, that while they declare positively, what *Curates* are oblig'd to in this Case, I think, they cannot be clear'd of Rashness, who proceed otherwise with these Spending Christians; and then, if this be Just; how unhappy must their Condition be, who are judg'd Unworthy of being admitted to the Means of Salvation!

For my part, I am fully convinc'd of the Justice of this Determination, and find every Day fresh Proofs to confirm me in this Judgment: For as I Travel about, or have Occasion of discoursing, I enquire, what is become of such Families, and such Gentlemen of Estates, who some Years since were Honorable in their Country? And I find

find so many Families Dispers'd, and Estates Parcell'd out, or entirely Sold, and that Extravagant Spending is still at the bottom, that I stand surpriz'd, and within my self Cry out, What are these? Are they Christians, who thus Invade their own Families and Estates, and lay them Waste, as if some Barbarous Enemy had broke in upon them? Are they Christians, who thus unnaturally make Slaves of their Children, and make that their own Diversion, which must unavoidably become their Ruin? Are they Christians, who—but why should I say more? A little Considerations of the many and important Mischiefs they do (without reflecting upon the Extravagancies by which they do it) and of the Unhappiness both as to Body and Soul, which they entail upon their Generation, is enough to take off all Surprize from the Decision above-mention'd, and to turn it wholly to the other side, in wondring how such Persons can think of going to the Sacraments, who are engag'd in such an unchristian Method. For what if they have not so wholly renounc'd Religion, as to lay aside all the Practice of it? What if something commendable is yet found in them? Does this qualifie them

them for the Sacraments, because they are not altogether Heathens? The guilt of one Sin is enough to exclude them as unworthy; and what then must be the Judgment of them, when they are under this guilt, which has the Complication of many Crimes? And what, tho' the Estate be their own? Does this give them a Right of abusing it? It is their own to use; but what part of the Gospel gives them any further Power over it. May they set Fire to their House, or Blow it up, because it is their own? May they take their Money, and throw it into the Sea, because 'tis their own? The Law will not call them to an Account for such Madness, because of the Title they have in it. But has not God a Sovereign Dominion over all they possess? Are they not to render to him an Account of the Administration of whatever they call their own? And what an Account will it be of his Blessings, when that is Prodigally Wasted, which should have been the Provision of their Family, and a Help to the Poor for Generations? They are bound to Act by the Principles of Reason and the Gospel; and they cannot live in the known Breach of these, but by Rebel-

ling against him, who has given these for a Law to Man.

There is no one Head therefore, upon which these Spenders can justifie, or even excuse what they do; and tho' the Law be silent, yet this cannot be interpreted in Favor to them; but only, in Punishment of their Madness, by leaving them to be their own Executioners; For certainly, while there is so much Severity in the Law against Thieves and Pirates, there can be nothing of Favor suppos'd to these.

The Case then is Clear, that all States and Conditions of Christians are capable of Salvation; and yet that this cannot be expected, but only, as far as every particular Christian is Faithful in the Obligations of his State; without this, Religion or Piety cannot be Sincere. Help therefore, O God, all Christians according to their several Degrees, help the Poor and the Rich, help Virgins, and those that are Married, teach them to be Faithful in all Duties, and may all meet in One Body to glorifie thee for ever.

Alas! how many are bound to these Principles of Reason and the Gospel; and they cannot live in the known Breach of these, but by Rebel-

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The Annunciation, March 25.

ON this Day, when the Blessed Virgin was commended from Heaven, and by the Voice of an Angel was declar'd *Full of Grace*, and that *Our Lord was with her*, it must be as needless for Man to publish her Praises, as it is Prophane to doubt of her Worth. To be *Full of Grace*, is the greatest Perfection, of which a Creature is capable upon Earth; and when this is not only Witness'd by an Angel, but also Confirm'd by God, in the Choice he made of her to be Mother of his Only Son made Man, all are bound in deference to this Authority, to acknowledge this Singular Priviledge of Grace, and none can be at a Loss for a Reason, why *All Generations shall call her Blessed*.

Where there is such an Authentic proof of a Supernatural Excellency beautifying a Soul, it cannot be question'd, without doing wrong to Justice, but there is an Honor due to it. It is the Command of God, deliver'd by S. Paul. *Render to all their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honor to whom Honor is due.*

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due, *Rom. 13. 7.* And if there be an Honor due to Magistrates, of whom the Apostle here speaks, and to Father and Mother, as is enjoin'd in the Commandments, because of the Participation of the Divine Power Communicated to them, and by whose Deputation they Act ; it must certainly with more Reason be due to those, whose Excellency is not from Power, but from Grace, which is a Participation of the Divine Nature. Upon this Consideration, the Just and Holy Servants of God, even upon Earth, have always been esteem'd Honorable ; because Honor being due to Excellency, the Excellency they possess, is of all the Greatest, as being the Participation of God himself : *If a Man Love me, he will keep my Words ; and my Father will Love him, and we will Come to him, and make our Abode with him, Joh. 14. 25.* What greater Excellency, than to be the Abode and Residence of God, or, as *S. Paul* says it, to be the *Temple of the Holy Ghost* ? If therefore there was Reason for that Proclamation, *Esth. 6. 9. Sic honorabitur, quemcunq; voluerit rex honorare ;* so shall the Man be Honor'd, whom the King desires to Honor ; how much more Reason is there to judge those Persons worthy of Honor, whom

whom God himself, in so Eminent a manner, has thought fit to Honor, as to make them his Temple, and the Place of his Abode? Honor here must be so far from being Injurious to God, that he must be reputed to despise God, who has so little regard to his Gifts, and to those Souls, which he has Sanctified by his Grace and his Presence. Those Christians, who have a due Apprehension of the Majesty of God, cannot but judge those Places Honorable and Worthy of his Respect, which God has chose for his Worship and Presence; and this God himself requir'd of *Moses* and *Joshua*, when they were commanded to put off their Shoes from their Feet, because the Ground whereon they stood, was Holy, *Ex. 3. 5. Jos. 5. 15.* and if this Honor be due to the very Ground, which is in some manner Sanctified by God's Presence; it may be easily understood, upon much better Title, to be due to those Select Souls, in which God inhabits, and are capable of a much more perfect Sanctification than the Earth. And must it not then be own'd from these Principles and Instances of Holy-writ, that there was an Honor due to the Blessed Virgin, even while upon Earth, since the Di-

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vine Grace did so abound in her *Full of Grace*, and God made her the Place of his Abode, *Our Lord is with thee.*

And if this be own'd, must it not then, upon stronger Reasons, be allow'd, that still greater Honor is due to her now in Heaven, where being more fully possess'd of God, she is more Honor'd by him, and more Honorable to us thro' his Gifts, and the more perfect Participation, which she has of God? If Virtue and Holiness be Honorable even in a Mortal Body, it must be much more so amongst the Blessed, where the Excellencies of the Soul are rais'd to a more eminent degree. Whence it cannot be question'd, but the Honor and Veneration, which is due to the Just upon Earth, is due to them, in a more Excellent degree, when receiv'd into Heaven: And so it must be own'd of the B. Virgin, whose Prerogatives of Glory are now as Singular, as were those of Grace, before her Dissolution.

But if Honor be due to the B. Virgin, because God has Honor'd her by the Excellency of his Gifts, and the Communication of Himself to her; may there not be Danger of Honoring her above what is due, and so doing Injury to the Divine Prerogative? The Great
Titles

Titles given her, the Form of Addresses made to her, the Application of the Whole Pfalter to her Name, &c. seem occasion enough for asking this Question. They are made the Occasion; but if the Doctrin of the Church be suppos'd, and taken along with these Titles, Addresses, &c. the Danger of giving her Divine Honour cannot be apprehended. For where Persons are instructed in this Full Principle of Religion, that there is but One only God, the Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth, and of all things in them; that he governs all things, and that nothing is done, but according to his Pleasure or Permission; this must be accompanied, even in the most illiterate, with this Necessary Consequence, that there is no other God, and therefore, no other but him alone to be Honor'd and Worship'd as God. Let then the Great Titles, Addresses &c. to the B. Virgin be read by Persons, whose Heart is possess'd with these Principles, and whatever these Addresses may sound as to the Letter, they must necessarily have this Judgment; that they are to be understood in such a Sense, not as Proper to God, but as Applicable to Creatures.

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This must be suppos'd in all Persons, tho' of the Meapest Capacity, for otherwise it cannot be safe for them to read any Book, and there will be Danger of Idolatry even from the Scripture itself, because Words are so Equivocal, and the same so often applied both to God and Man, that if so much Discretion be not suppos'd in Readers, they can be no where safe. The Word God is applied to Moses; *And the Lord said to Moses, see, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh, Exod. 7. 1.* It is applied likewise to all the Magistrates; *Thou shalt not revile the God's, Exod. 22. 28.* Christ is the only Son of God, and how often are the Just, in Scripture, stil'd the Children of God? Christ is the Light of the World, and yet he says to his Apostles, *You are the Light of the World, Mat. 5. 14.* Worship is to be given to God alone, and yet 'tis said, *1 Chron. 29. 20. All the Congregation—bowed down their Heads, and Worshipped the Lord, and the King.* Infinit of these Expressions there are in Scripture, which if taken every where in the Rigorous Literal Sense, would make way for a Thousand Ridiculous Absurdities, for Prophaneness, Idolatry and Blasphemy. How then are they to be read and understood? They are to be read, not

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with a Malicious Spirit, which purposely takes every thing in the worst Sense it will bear, and then charges it with the Absurdities of its own Perverse Construction: No; there is no Book in the World can stand this Test: But they are to read with the Spirit of Humility and Submission, which observing the seeming Contradictions and Incongruities of Words, enquires, in what Sense they are to be understood, to Reconcile them to the Principles and Doctrin of Christianity; and with Reference to these, takes some in a Literal Sense, some in a Figurative, &c. and by these Allowances delivers all from those Absurdities, which Passion would Charge upon them.

This must be the Spirit, with which the Scripture is read; and it will bear no other. And now let the Forms of Prayer, Titles, Addresses, Psalters, to the B. Virgin, be read with the same Spirit, and then the difficulty will soon be clear'd; for this Spirit will not Charge, but Enquire, in what Sense they are understood by the Church, which uses them? And the General Answer to this will be; that they are to be understood with Reference to the Faith of the Church. Now, this being the Faith of the Church; that there

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is but One only God, and he alone to be Worship'd as God; he alone to be Pray'd to as God; he alone to be Confided in as God; he alone to be Honor'd, Serv'd and Depended on as God: By these Principles must be Regulated whatever is read in her Books; and if there be any Expressions found in them, which seem to Attribute to the B. Virgin any of these Prerogatives or Excellencies, which belong to God alone, and are not Communicable to Creatures, they are intended by her, and are to be understood by Readers, in such a Sense only, in which they may be applied to Creatures. For since the Church believes and teaches the Faithful, that the B. Virgin is only a Creature of God; that all the Grace she had on Earth, was his Gift; that the Glory, she now possesses, is his Recompence; that tho' she may prevail with him by her Prayers in our behalf, yet that she has nothing in her Power, but absolutely and entirely depends on the Good-pleasure and Will of God. Since the Church, I say, thus believes and teaches; all Expressions in Books relating to the B. Virgin, must be accordingly understood in a Sense accommodated to the Person, to whom they are directed.

And

And this cannot be thought either difficult or unusual. Because common use, thro' the Scantiness of Words, has gain'd so far, that the Petitions address'd to God, as *Help, Direct, Save, Grant, have Mercy, &c.* which suppose in God an Infinite, Independant Power, are also in the same Terms, made to Creatures, here upon Earth, whose Power is wholly depending on God. The Words likewise, which signify the Attributes of God, as *Power, Wisdom, Goodness, Mercy, Justice,* are likewise applied to Creatures, tho' the things signified be infinitely different. Now if Common use has prevail'd so far without Exception or Scandal, why should the Exception be only made here, as if we were not to take the Liberty of Words, which Common Use has given them? If then this Indulgence of accommodating Words to the Sense intended, be necessary in reading all Books, even the very Scripture; it cannot be in Justice refus'd here. And if any raise Objections, because they refuse it, it is not the Church is to answer, but their own Perverse or Captious Humor, which will not take Words in the Sense accommodated to the things, to which they are applied. But it is
time

Time now to leave these, and on this
 Day, sacred to the Incarnation of the
 Son of God, to give Thanks for this
 Infinite Mercy, and to profess here, that
 we believe God infinitely Adorable by
 all his Creatures on Earth, and by
 the B. Virgin, and all the Saints in Hea-
 ven; that the Honor due to him, ob-
 liges us to Honor him in all his Gifts;
 that he is infinitely Honorable for his
 Essential Perfections; that Creatures of
 themselves are nothing, and yet Ho-
 norable for whatever Perfections he has
 Communicated to them. For this
 Reason we Honor the Just on Earth
 and in Heaven, and believe, that not the
 giving this Honor, but the refusing
 it, is injurious to the Honor due to
 God.

Library of Wordsworth

St. George, April 23.

This Saint being chose the Patron
 of our Country by our Pious An-
 cestors, who renouncing the Heathen-
 ism, in which they had been Educated,
 embraced Christianity, and help'd to
 convey it down to us, we have Reason to
 approve their Choice, and to Hope,
 that

that this Blessed Martyr will be mindful of our Country, and by his Prayers obtain of God that Mercy, by which it may be deliver'd from the many Evils, to which it is subject, and be restor'd to those Blessings, which may render it a Nation acceptable to our Lord. God has been pleas'd so far to disclose the Secrets of Heaven to us, as to lay the ground of this Hopes, in the Information he gives of the Blessed Spirits above making an Interest with him for the good of a Particular People, and offering Petitions for their Deliverance. This he has discover'd to us by the Prophet Zechariah, c. 1. v. 12. who, in the time of the Jews being Captives in Babylon, thus describes an Angel making his Address to God, in behalf of the Captives: *Then the Angel of the Lord answer'd and said: O Lord of Hosts, how long will thou not have Mercy on Jerusalem, and on the Cities of Judah, against which thou hast had Indignation these Threescore and Ten Years?* And to shew, how Effectual this was with God, the Prophet adds; *and the Lord answer'd the Angel with Good Words, and Comfortable Words, v. 13.* Having therefore this Demonstration of the Charitable Application made to God by an Angel, in
behalf

behalf of a Suffering People, and a Petition made for their being receiv'd into Mercy; have not we Reason to Hope, that we may be the Object of a like Charity; since our Country recommended to the Patronage of this Saint, must be a Motive of his being as much desirous of our Good, as this Angel was of *Jerusalem*? But this Subject must be adjourn'd to another Occasion, when I shall speak more fully of it. And at present I must enquire, since there are so many Romantic Stories of this Saint, how the Legends of the Saints come to be so much encourag'd and read, when they are esteem'd by some no better than so many Fables or Dreams?

To give some Satisfaction in this Matter, I say, *First*, That the Legends or Lives of Saints, are not propos'd or encourag'd to be read, as Matters of Faith. They are no more than Histories, and no more Faith is requir'd in reading them, than in reading other Prophane Histories, in which every one is at liberty of giving Credit to, or questioning the Relation, according to the Authority, upon which it depends. *2dly*, It must be own'd, that the Lives of some Saints are much question'd

by Authors, as not having sufficient Authority even for exacting an Historical Faith. In this Point some *Greek* Writers are accus'd for imposing their own Fictions upon the World for History; and accordingly their Writings have the Reputation they deserve, and are esteem'd in a great part Fabulous.

3^{dly}, There are many other Lives, which have as good Authority, as any History can require; being Writ by Men of known Sanctity or Integrity, or Recorded by such Historians, whose Writings are universally receiv'd by the World as Authentic. And great Care has been taken by the most Learned of our Age, to distinguish these from the Former, whose Authority is so much question'd.

4^{thly}, The Distinction of such Lives as are suspected from others, that are Authentic, is not to be taken from the seeming Probability of the Relations contain'd in them; for certainly those, which were never question'd as Pen'd by *S. Athanasius*, *S. Jerom*, &c. have as many Wonderful and seemingly Incredible Passages in them, as others, which are rejected, as little better than Spiritual Romances. And therefore those Persons, who upon meeting such Relations

Relations, as exceed the ordinary course of Nature, without examining their Authority, presently condemn them as Fictions, have more Reason to suspect their own Incredulous Temper, which being not acquainted with the Power of God, or the Promises of Christ, confines their Faith to their Eyes, and puts them upon ridiculing whatever they do not comprehend. If these would remember, that God's Arm is not shortn'd, and what Christ promis'd to those that believ'd in him, that they should do greater Miracles, than he had done, *John* 14. 12. and then consider the eminent Faith and Fervor of such his Servants, who have liv'd here on Earth more like Angels than Men; they might hence find Motives for enlarging their Faith; and, where the Authority appears not to them sufficient for exacting an Historical Assent, at least, give a Check to that Incredulous Humor, which making their own Probabilities the Measure of Truth, is ready to Laugh at every thing that exceeds them, and to cast the Wonders of the Divine Power, into the Number of Fables.

Lastly, that tho' the mixing Fabulous Relations with the Lives of Saints is
not

not to be approv'd, and much less, when Miracles are contriv'd for Confirmation of a disputed Truth; yet there may be an Advantage in reading such Lives, where the whole Design is no other, than to represent more lively the Horror of Sin, the Dangers of the World, the Means of overcoming both, or any other such Practical Truths. The Reason is, because Artificial Relations are as Effectual in Illustrating or Pressing a Truth, as Matters of Fact; as may be seen in Scripture, where great Truths are laid before both Pharisees and People under Parables, which are only Compos'd, or Artificial Relations. The Parable, that *Nathan* took up, when employ'd upon God's Commission, did as fully convince *David* of the Foulness of his Crime, as if it had been a True History: And the other suggested by *Jacob* to the Widow of *Thekoah*, 2 Sam. or Kin. 14. 1. prevail'd as effectually with him, for the recalling of *Abfalom*. The greatest Moral Truths of the Gospel are deliver'd in Parables; and tho' they are generally known to be Parables; yet sometimes it is not so, as in the Relation of *Dives* and *Lazarus*; upon which the most Learned of the Antient Fathers are divided; some

Some thinking it to be a Parable, and others a true History: But whether one or the other, it is equally Instructive to us, that Abus'd Riches are the Way to Hell, and Patient Poverty the Purchase of an Eternal Crown: If the Reader learns this from it, there is no more design'd in the Relation, and all other Enquiry about it is Needless.

If this be Matter of Fact, then it must be own'd, there is Authority enough, for Pressing Moral Duties, and others, under Parables, or Compos'd, Artificial Relations, and this with profit to the Reader. And if this was the *Grecian* Piety, tho' proposing Fables for True History can deserve no Apology; yet under such Relations to Represent each Vice and Virtue in lively Colors, as is done in Parables, can deserve no Censure; since by these there may be as Solid Instruction given, as by the most Exact History. Those, who read Romances, may appear Evidence for this, whose Souls are as much softn'd by those Amorous Fictions, as if the Relations were real Truths. If then it be suppos'd, that in some Lives of Saints, there is a Mixture of what is not Authentic, yet still it cannot be denied,

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denied, but they may be Beneficial to the Reader, which is the Principal End of Books; and if the Reader will suppose them Parables, then he will prevent all the Design, if there was any, of imposing upon him.

This I think is the true State of this Matter: What I have to advise the Faithful upon it, is, that as Excessive Credulity is a Weakness, so it is to be Forward and Positive in rejecting all for Fabulous, which does not appear Probable. The middle Way is the best; where there is not Authority enough, such as is usual in History, let them suspend both their Faith and their Censures; thus, if it be Fabulous, they are not impos'd on; and if it be True, they are not injurious to the Works of God's Power. This may suffice for this Subject. And now, on this Day of our Patron, let me Conclude in the Words of S. Gregory Nyssen, with an Address to this Martyr, as he did to S. Theodore, Martyr, in *Orat. de S. Theod. Intercede and Pray for our Country before the Lord and Sovereign of the Universe.—* *Altho' thou hast left this World, yet thou knowest our Desires, our Wants, and the Necessities of Human Life. Ask for Peace.—*
And

*And if a more powerful Plea and Intercession
be needful, Summon all thy Brother Mar-
tyrs, and with them join in Prayers. Let
the Intercession of many Just, conceal the Sins
of the People. Amen.*

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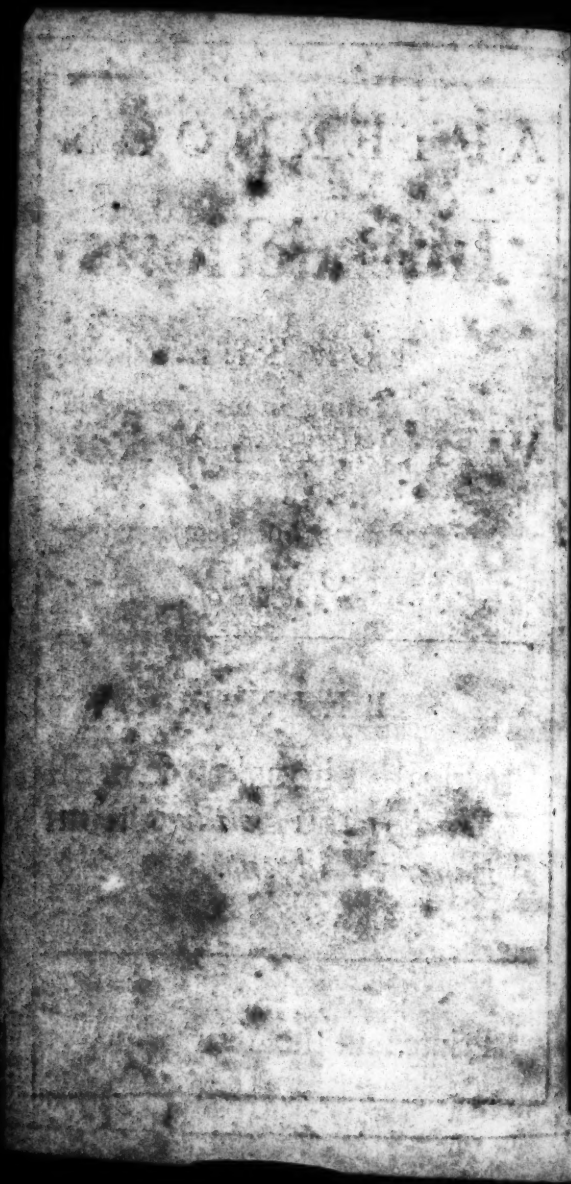
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W.

World.

The World contrary to Christ; how false all its Measures, and how dangerous its Ways. 4 S. after Pent. It. 5 S. *after Pent.*

The Folly of a Worldly Life. 9 S. *after Pent.*

A Judgment of the World, and its Followers. 24 S. *after Pent.*

AFTER-

AFTERNOON

Instructions

FOR THE

WHOLE YEAR.

Low-Sunday.

ON this Day, when Christ, appearing to his Apostles, gave them the Blessing of Peace, *Pax vobis, Peace be with you*: The most proper Subject must be, to consider, What this Peace is, which is the Christian's Blessing, and wherein it consists; that so, when it is known, every one may be Industrious in seeking it, and have some Directions, How and Where to find it.

There are Two Sorts of Peace offer'd to every Christian; the Peace of the World,

World, and the Peace of God: The Peace of the World is that, which the World gives, and is like it self False, Uncertain, and of little Durance. The Peace of God is that, which the World cannot give, but is the Gift of God, and like himself, True, Constant, and Eternal. The Peace of the World consists in the Possession and Enjoyment of Worldly Goods; and these being Uncertain and Changeable, the Peace, which is built on them, can be no better. The Peace of God consists in the Union of the Heart with God, by a Submission to his Will, and a Dependance on his Goodness; and as the Will and Goodness of God are Unchangeable; so the Peace, which is built on this Foundation, must be Solid and Permanent.

This Peace, thus founded and established on the Will and Goodness of God, is that, which Christ gave to his Apostles, and is the Christian's Blessing; and he can have no solid Comfort in this Life, but what is the Fruit of this Peace. For tho' the Divine Bounty has provided many other Blessings upon Earth, which bring Comfort to the Natural Man, as are those of Plenty, of Quiet, of Friends, of

of Children, of Success, besides infinite others; yet none of these are the Christian's Blessing, nor give Comfort to him, any farther than he sees them to be Conformable to the Divine Will, and are the Effects of his Goodness to him; and whenever, in the Use or Enjoyment of these, he transgresses those Bounds, which the Will of God has fixt to them, tho' he possesses the Blessings, yet he loses both his Comfort and Peace; so that tho' he may rejoice, as to the Natural Man; yet, as Christian; he is Unhappy under the Enjoyment. The Reason is, because as far as he departs from the Will of God, he is so far remov'd from the Foundation of Christian Peace, and has no other Comfort left, but only of Sense or Nature; and knowing all this Comfort to be ill grounded, that it has no Dependence on God, that, instead of leading to him, it separates him from God, and puts him in Danger of being Eternally separated; hence the Principles of Faith, that are yet in him, become his daily Reproach, and the Conviction of a real Unhappiness lies as a Weight under that Frothy Joy, which makes him smile to the World.

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From this Principle it may be easily concluded, in What Manner true Peace is to be sought, and Who they are, that seek it. It must be sought, not by eagerly grasping at whatever courts the Inclination; nor by using all Means for gratifying the most violent Desires; nor by the possession of what is thus with Earnestness desir'd; but by considering in every Proposal of Human Life; how far the Will of God gives Encouragement to it, and not to move one Step, either to the Right, or to the Left, or in advancing, but only as this marks out the Way. And hence they alone are the Persons, that seek true Peace, who take no Measures of what they do from themselves, but from the Will of God, and give a Check to all those Desires, which they observe not agreeable to this Sacred Rule. Proceeding thus, these have always the Satisfaction of Resting in God, and find sufficient Matter of Joy in the Peace of a well regulated Conscience, even when Nature is uneasy enough, and ready to murmur at the Rigor of Disciplina.

This Satisfaction of Inward Peace they find, even when the World is in Disorder about them; when rash
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Judgments put ill Constructions upon what they do, and paint them out in the most disadvantageous Colors; when Indiscretion or Malice raises War against them; when Sickness persecutes, Want perplexes, or Death threatens with its approaching Terrors; they still have these Interior Refreshments comforting their Souls, That all is according to the Will of God; That the Accomplishment of his Will in them is their Happiness; That all the Evils they suffer will be to their Advantage, in the Fruit of an Eternal Crown: That they are in the Hands of God; That 'tis their only Concern, to be Faithful in his Service, to the best of their Abilities; to think of no Relief by undue Means, but to leave all to the Appointments of his Will. In this manner endeavoring at all times to fix their Comfort in the Testimony of a good Conscience, ever subject to the Will of God, they stand arm'd against all Accidents, and are not in the Power of Ill Tongues, or a Malicious World, to destroy that Peace, which, being built on a sure Foundation, cannot be injur'd by their Attempts.

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This being the Temper of the Christian Spirit, where the Blessing of Christ prevails; it is what all Christians ought daily to pray for, and daily labor to obtain; that they may rest in the Will of God being done in them, and place their Comfort in a good Conscience. And ought not Christians now of all degrees look into the present State of their Souls, and taking Observation from their daily Practice, of the distance, in which they are from this Spirit of Inward Peace, accordingly direct their Prayers and Endeavors for coming nearer to it?

How much have they yet to do, who upon the usual Disappointments of Human Life, afflict themselves, and know not how to keep their Thoughts compos'd, or fit for discharging any Duty to God or their Neighbor, but when all things run smoothly on, according to their Wish?

How much have they yet to do, who upon any Reproof of those above them, or upon any seeming Reproach, Contempt, Disrespect, or ill Humor, of others, or from any Accidental Oversight or Indiscretion, which they apprehend will lessen something of their Esteem, presently lose all Interi-

or Quiet; and have their Minds disturb'd with a Thousand Chimerical Vindications, Complaints and Replies, till Time wears out the Impression, or some more considerable Misfortune comes in to their Relief, and shews them the Unreasonableness of all such Trouble?

How much have they yet to do, who amidst the Comforts of many Blessings, or at least, with the Supplies of all that is necessary, so far yield to the Inclinations of a Melancholy Disposition, and open their Hearts to the Entertainments of Afflicting Fears and Amusements, that unaccountable Weights, Darknes and Storms, are ever pressing upon their Mind, so as to deprive them of all that Liberty of Spirit, in which their Souls ought to seek and ascend to God?

All these, with many others, ought to remember, that they are not in the Possession of that true Peace, which Christ gave his Apostles; and that great Endeavors ought to be us'd for obtaining it: For tho' it is not to be expected, that a Christian should be without Feeling, or have no Sence of what touches to the Quick; yet 'tis expected, his Heart should be better fixt,

fixt, than to be put into Disorder, for every thing he feels; and his Mind better principled, than to think such things worth its Trouble, which he ought to despise. What a Contemptible Thing is the Peace of a Christian Breast, if it depends on the Breath or Humor of those, with whom we converse? And how barren is the Faith of Eternal Goods, where common Difficulties, and the unavoidable Accidents of a dying Life, put by all the Concern of a Life to come? Such Peace as this is not built on God, or his Blessed Will; it is not founded on a Rock, but depends wholly upon Humor, and therefore is as changeable as it. Wherefore something is to be done in this Point, for settling a Peace upon better Principles, and for bringing the Mind to rest so much upon the Will of God, as not to let every Trifle, that comes cross to Inclination, be enough to put it into Disorder. Let these endeavor to be Faithful in their Duty, and place their Comfort in doing the Will of God; and as for what others say or do, this they ought not to think worth their Concern or Trouble.

But those Christians, who have the
most

most to do, are such as rashly pursue their Inclinations, as to Interest, Pleasure, Honors, Company, Divertisements, &c. seeking in these to gratifie their own Private Desires, without regarding, as they ought to do, how far they are displeasing to God. These are the farthest off true Peace; for tho' their great Business is to please themselves, and they are not without Satisfaction in what they do; yet this is far from being the Christian Peace; *Non est Pax impiis: There is no Peace to the Wicked.* They see themselves living in the Offence of God; they know their Life to be short, and cannot tell, but they may be snatch'd away under all the Deformity of their Sins, before the Tribunal of a Just God; and tho' they are industrious in stifling all such Thoughts, yet they cannot wholly suppress them; tho' they often drown them, yet they will rise again, and at times not fail to represent to them the Unhappiness of their present State, and of that, which is yet to come. And what Peace can there be here, when they see their Unjust Gain and Satisfaction to be confin'd to a few Moments; and that 'tis only the Breath of an uncertain Life, which divides

divides them from Eternal Misery, and Everlasting Torments? Can there be Peace in such a Prospect? No, there cannot be true Peace to the Wicked. These can have no Peace, but what is to be the Effect of War, of a War against themselves, and all their Sinful Passions: For till, by the Endeavors of a Laborious Penance, they have gain'd this Victory, made their Peace with God, and thus provided for Eternity, they can have no Possibility of finding Peace within themselves.

In this manner are all Christians, according to their several Circumstances, to seek for Peace. It is the Effect of thy Infinite Mercy, O God, that thou wilt be the Eternal Peace of those that love thee; but 'tis likewise thy Unchangeable Decree, that none shall come to the Possession of this Eternal Peace, but those alone, who seek thy Peace upon Earth. Grant therefore, O God, that we may be all Sincerely Industrious in obtaining this Blessing of Peace; Grant, that in all we do, we may be directed by thy Holy Will; Grant, that in all we suffer, we may submit to thy Holy Will; may in this be our Comfort and our Peace, and thus may we come at length to find our Eternal Peace in Thee.

Second

Second Sunday after Easter.

HAVING in last Sunday's Discourse laid open the Nature of Christian Peace, it follows plainly, from what has been there said, that this Peace is not an idle Rest, exempt from all Labor and Pain, such as might be answerable to the Wishes of Sloth and Self-love. Neither is it a Perfect Tranquillity of Mind, obtain'd by an entire Defeat of all Enemies; for this cannot be expected, but as the happy Portion of the next Life; but it is a Liberty of the Children of God, the Effect of a Submission to the Divine Will, in all that he Commands or Permits.

This Peace then depending entirely on the Divine Will, it cannot be a true and solid Peace, but upon a true Knowledge of the Will of God. For if the Will of God be not known, then there is a Mistake in the Foundation, and consequently the Peace built on such a mistaken Foundation, is not a true, but deceitful Peace.

As to the greatest Part of what we suffer, the Will of God is evident; because

because nothing happening in this World, but by his Pleasure or Permission, it must be his Will, that we patiently suffer and submit; and a Peace of Mind grounded on this Submission, is a true Christian Peace. It is the same likewise, as to the greatest part of what we have to do in this Life; because God has manifested his Will, as to all Moral Duties, by the Law he has written in the Hearts of all; upon which S. Paul says, *Rom. 2. 14.* That even the Gentiles, who have not the Law that was given to Moses, may do by Nature the things contain'd in the Law; because these, having not the Law, are a Law to themselves; who see the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience bearing witness of them, and their Thoughts accusing or excusing one another. And hence he concludes, that whatever these do of Evil, the Guilt of Sin shall be charg'd upon them, because *they are without Excuse, Rom. 1. 20.* and that *as many as have sinned without a Law, shall also perish without a Law, c. 2. 12.* Now if this be so, as to the Heathens, who have no more than the Light of Nature to direct them, and by the visible Things,

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are to learn the Eternal Power and
Godhead of him, that made them;
how much more must it be so to Chri-
stians, who have not only the same
Light of Nature, but the whole Law
of God deliver'd to them in the Com-
mandments and Sacred Scripture, by
which they are more expressly instruct-
ed in the whole Will of God? And if
Heathens are without Excuse, in not
doing the Will of God; where shall
Christians find their Excuse, who have
so much greater Opportunities of
knowing it? It can be no wonder, that
as many of these, *as sin in the Law, shall*
be judged by the Law. Ib.

By this Law then, thus written and
deliver'd, Christians may understand
the Will of God, in their particular A-
ctions under the Heads of their sever-
al Moral Duties; and by taking this
for their Rule of what they do, they
have the Means of laying the Founda-
tion of true Peace in their Souls.
Hence may be seen, what it is that
makes a good Conscience, which is so
absolutely necessary for this Peace; it
is the Regulation of our Thoughts, of
our Words and Actions, according to
the Law and Will of God. When we
do thus, we have the Testimony of a
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good Conscience, bearing Witness of what we do. When we act contrary to this Law, we have an ill Conscience reproving and appearing against us; and this would be enough for our Condemnation, were there no other Law to judge us, but that of our own Conscience.

From this Principle it is manifest, That to live and act according to the Principles of Education, is not enough for a good Conscience, and consequently, not for laying the Ground of true Peace. The Reason is clear, because Education is not the Rule of a good Conscience, but the Law of God; and therefore, till the Method of Education be brought to this Test, and strictly examin'd, to see, whether it be conformable to this Law, the Christian has not sufficient Motives for resting in it; and if he does rest in it, he acts not according to the Light of Reason, which has this Principle imprinted in it; That the Will of God ought to be his Rule.

2^{dly}, It is manifest, that to follow Customs, General Practices, the Example of Parents, of Friends, of Company, the Sentiments of those, to whom we are affected, is not enough for

for a Good Conscience, and consequently, not for laying the ground of True Peace. The Reason is the same; because many Customs, Practices, and often the Example of Parents, Friends, &c. are not agreeable to the Law of God, but contrary to it; and the Law of God being the Christian's Rule; no Custom, Practice or Example, can be follow'd with a Good Conscience, till, upon Examination, it be found conformable to the Law of God.

3^{dly}, It is manifest, that to follow the bent of Private Inclination, is not sufficient ground for a Good Conscience. Because Private Inclinations being generally the Effect of Corruption, are contrary to the Law of God, and lead to all kinds of Sin; and therefore, till they are well examin'd, to follow them cannot be the Way to Peace; but only of that False Peace, which ends in Eternal Confusion.

The Law of God then is the Way to Peace, and the Rule of a Good Conscience: But what is to be done, in such Cases, which being not expressly determin'd in this Law, are to be resolv'd by the force of Reason, by Inferences, Deductions and Applications? Here there must necessarily be great danger of Mistakes; because every one's Cap-

city does not qualifie him for doing this with any tolerable Security. There may be Mistakes thro' Weakness of Reason and Oversight; there may be as great Mistakes, where the Reason is Sound, but influenc'd by Interest, Education, Affection, or other Passion. And these being already cast out, as not sufficient for laying the ground of a Good Conscience; in what an uncertain Condition must Christians be, when having the Law of God before them, the Application of it is in the Hands of such Passions or Weakness, as are not capable of doing it, without Injury to Justice or Truth? What must the Conscience be, when these are the Interpreters and Judges of the Law? This danger is still greater, when the Truth is to be determin'd of such Mysteries of Faith, which tho' contain'd in the Law, are yet so exprels'd, that they may be very differently understood, and are differently understood by Men of great Learning and profess'd Piety; so that, what some believe as Truths necessary to Salvation, others dare not believe for fear of Damnation. What is to be done in these Cases, for settling a Good Conscience, and obtaining true Peace of Mind?

It is certain, that in all Doubtful Cases

Cases of the Divine Law, whether in Points of Justice, or of Faith, there is great danger of being influenc'd by Interest, Convenience, Affection, or Education; none of which are good Interpreters of the Law, nor give sufficient grounds for a Good Conscience, or Solid Peace of Mind. But however, the Law of God has determin'd, what is to be done in these Cases, for avoiding Mistakes. For God has appointed Pastors and Priests as Judges of the People; and to them Application is to be made, for the Resolution of whatever Doubts occur. This was the express Ordination of God in the Old Testament, *Deut.* 17. 8. where he gives Command, that Matters of Controversie should be brought before the Priests; that the People should do according to the Sentence these should pronounce, without declining either to the right Hand or to the left; and that the Man, that should do presumptuously, and not hearken to the Priest, should be put to Death. And the Encouragement the People had for this Reference and Submission, is deliver'd by the Prophet Malachi, *c.* 2. 7. For that the Priest's Lips should keep Knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his Mouth; for he is

the Angel (or Messenger) of the Lord of Hosts. Thus were Doubts to be remov'd, and both Peace of Mind and a Good Conscience to be obtain'd in the Old Law.

It is the same in the New: For Christ has given Pastors and Teachers in his Church; and as he was sent by his Father, so he has sent them, *Jo. 20. 21.* And for what? *To be Overseers, and to Feed the Church of Christ, Act. 20. 38.* For the perfecting of the Saints; for the Work of the Ministry, for the Edifying the Body of Christ. — *That we henceforth be no more Children, toss'd to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, Ephes. 4. 11.* Here is part of their Commission; and are not they here declar'd to be the Teachers of all that is necessary for Perfecting the Saints, and Establishing the Faithful in Truth? Are not all Matters of Justice and of Faith here included? And are not the People commanded to hear them? *He that hears you, says Christ, hears me: And he that despises you, despises me, Luk. 10. 16.*

Here then, while Christians have those put over them by Christ, who being his Ministers, act by his Authority, and are to direct them in all that belongs to Salvation; is it not plain, what they

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are to do in all Difficult and Doubtful Cases? Christ has manifested his Will to them; and since, a Submission to the Will of God is the only Means for obtaining true Peace, and settling a Good Conscience, they may be assur'd, their Way to Truth and Peace, is to consult those, whom God has put over them for this end, and ordain'd that they should be directed by them.

But while the Pastors are Men, like others, may not they be influenc'd by Interest, Affection or Education, as well as the People? This Question the *Israelites* might have ask'd concerning *Moses* and *Aaron*; and whatever the Answer might have been, yet still, since God had so order'd it, they were oblig'd to be directed by them; and by no other Means could they come to the Peace of a Good Conscience. The Question therefore to be ask'd by Christians, is not, whether Pastors are Weak, like others? But, whether God has appointed them to be Guides to the People, and commanded these to hear and obey them? If he has, his Will is to be done, and it is the Only Way they have to Peace. Here is their Rule, and their Good is in Following it; with a Confidence always in God,

that he, who has given them Pastors, and commanded them to hear and submit, will either provide them such, as are qualified for their Charge; or at least, not Charge any Overights of Pastors upon them; since their Submission, is what he himself has appointed. But since all the Confidence is from God, because He has commanded Pastors to Teach, and the People to Hear; it may be easily understood, how it come to Peace of Conscience in the true Church of Christ; because the Command of Christ is to his Church, and his Goodness is engag'd to the Pastors of it, and the People have his express Order for acquiescing in their Direction. But out of it, how is this to be found; since no Learning is a Priviledge against Mistakes, or the By-alls of Interest and Education; and the Truth and Goodness of God engag'd to the Apostles, cannot be claim'd, but in Virtue of a Succession to them? Here then the Confidence cannot be in God, but in Human Learning only; and what a Poor ground is this for a Good Conscience, in the Solution of such Difficulties and Doubts, which are above all that is Human, and no Security of Truth

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can be expected, but only from God? Wherefore, since all Peace of a Good Conscience can proceed from no other Foundation, but from a Submission to the Will of God, grant, I beseech thee, O God, that all may sincerely seek thy Will, and there seek it, where thy Infinite Truth and Goodness are engag'd for finding it. I confess, O God, my whole Confidence is in thy Promises, and if I am not within those Bounds, where I can hope for the Effects of them, I own my self to be in a Total Despair of Inward Peace; because all that is Human is deceitful, and cannot afford rest to my Soul.

Third Sunday after Easter.

HAVING shewn, in the foregoing *Sundays*, that True Peace of Mind and a Good Conscience can have no other Foundation, but only in a Conformity and Submission to the Will of God; hence may be seen the Necessity of Obedience in all Christians, for coming to the Possession of True Peace, and this shall be the subject of the present Discourse, to enquire what Chri-

stian Obedience is, with the general Circumstances belonging to it.

Obedience is a Virtue, which makes a Man ready to do the Will of God, in whatever way the Divine Will is made known to us, whether immediately from God himself, or from those, whom he has set over us. By Virtue of this Obedience, we are, in Effect, divested of our own Will, and with all Sincerity resign the whole Disposition of our selves to God; so that while we feel Particular Inclinations within us, as likewise a Particular Bent of Fancy, Opinion, and Judgment, yet we suspend all these Faculties, as far as they are subject to us, and only give them the Liberty of approving or disapproving, of condemning, or abetting, as the Will of God directs. By this Virtue we are much rais'd above ourselves; whilst of our selves having a Reason, that is always Weak, very often Rash and Blind, and a Will most perversly Corrupt, such as would lead us into Temporal Follies and Eternal Misery; by the help of this Obedience, we have the Unerring Truth of God to become our Reason, and his Infinite Wisdom to be our Will, to direct us in our Judgment and our Choice.

Choice. And hence it becomes true, that whoever has this Obedience, does not now Judge or Chuse for himself, but God Judges and Chuses for him. What greater Happiness can Man desire, who is every way so Deceitful in himself, than to be under the Conduct of his God, whose overflowing Goodness cannot fail of leading him secure thro' all the Difficulties of Life, and bringing him at length to the inseparable Participation of himself?

This is so great a Happiness to Man, that he must be a Fool, who understands it not, and Maliciously Foolish, who makes this the Reproach of Human Reason, and Mad, who accepts it not. The only Wisdom, is to desire God to be our Universal Guide, our Reason, our Judgment, and our Will; and wherever he is pleas'd to manifest his Will, to follow it in all Simplicity of Mind, without raising Doubts or Questions; with all Freedom and Cheerfulness, with all Humility, Confidence and Perseverance, so as to let no Human Considerations interpose. This was the Obedience of *Abraham*, when being call'd by God, to go out of his Country, he went out, not knowing, as *S. Paul* says, whither he went, *Heb. 11. 8.*

And again, when being commanded to Sacrifice his Son, he undertook it, without admitting Doubts of the lawfulness of the Action; for what has Man to do, in moving Doubts, where God Commands? This was the Obedience of *Isaiah*, when at the Command of God, he Walked Naked and Bare-foot Three Years, *Isa.* 20. 2. This the Obedience of the Apostles, when they left all, to follow Christ, without considering how they were to subsist; and in undertaking the Conversion of the World, tho' they were but Twelve, Poor, Illiterate Men, little qualified for Preaching, and much less for Opposing the Errors and Power of the whole World.

These are Examples of the most Perfect Obedience upon Earth, such as Evacuates the whole Will of Man, and Centers him wholly in God. And yet it is what we are bound to follow, as often as God's Will is expressly manifest to us. This we are bound to do, First, in our Understanding, by receiving, and firmly assenting to the Truth of such Mysteries, as God has reveal'd to us, tho' these Mysteries are in themselves so Obscure to us, that all the Reason we have, is not able to give us any
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Light into them. It is enough, that God has reveal'd them; our Understanding must submit and obey, it must be Captivated; as the Apostle says, in Obedience to Christ, 2 Cor. 10. 5. The same Obedience of our Reason to God is necessary in all the Works of Providence; in many of which, tho' we cannot comprehend the Motives, upon which God Acts; nay, tho' they seem contrary to all we apprehend, yet upon the Principle of his Unerring Wisdom, we are oblig'd to confess, that whatever God does, is best to be done.

This is properly call'd *Blind Obedience*, because we Obey without seeing; and tho' presuming Wit may lay a Scandal upon it; yet nothing is more Reasonable; since 'tis nothing but the Subjection of Man to God, of Human Judgment to the Judgment and Wisdom of God. They that cannot understand this, have not the First Principle of Christianity in them; and they, that revile it, set themselves above God, and make way for Atheism. It is enough, and not only enough, but the greatest Mercy to a Christian, that he is not left to the Weakness of his own Dim Reason, but has God to lead him; and if he leads him, as he did

Saul, Acts 9 8. who opening his Eyes saw nothing; yet his Security is not the less, but the greater on this account, because now his Confidence is not in his own seeing, but in God that directs him.

Let then the conceited World trust in the Vanity of their own Seeing and Knowing, and upon this Sandy Foundation raise their pleasing Schemes of Wit and Religion; let these put in their Exceptions against Divine Truths, and Sacrilegiously Model all to the level of their own Apprehension, and thus go on to a Heaven of their own making, like their Religion. But, as for the Disciple of the Gospel, let *altum sapere*; being too Wise, be more the Object of his Fears, than his Wishes; let him be contented to go on without Seeing, where God leads the Way; and never desire the Light of his own Reason for his Guide, when he has the VVisdom of God for his Teacher. It must be own'd, that our only danger of Erring, is from the Mistakes of our own Reasoning: And who then, that has the least Glimpse of Reason, would not be glad of such a Guide, under whose Conduct, he may be carried on secure, especially, where the danger

ger is in the Concern of Eternity? VVould any complain here of being led on in the Dark, or refuse to go forward, because, with their own Eyes, they could not discern the Way? Deliver me, O God, from this Madness; it is the Effect of thy Infinite Goodness, that thou hast been pleas'd to reach us: I have Reason enough to see this Mercy; but as for questioning thy Truths, because my restless Curiosity is not satisfied, and my Reason cannot see into them, far be this from me. Be thou but my Guide, and tho' my Reason can discern no more of what thou teachest, than my Eyes, I shall go on Content and Cheerful, I shall ask no Questions, nor raise any Doubts. And if the World reproach me of Blindness, I shall reply, it is my Comfort and Glory, that I have better Eyes than my own to see for me.

This ready Obedience of the Understanding to God, is not only to be, when God speaks immediately by himself; but likewise in whatever other way he is pleas'd to manifest his Truths and Will to us. The only thing, that obliges us to submit, is the Divine Authority; and whether this appears immediately in God, or in his Angels,

Angels, Prophets or Apostles, as sent by him, the Obligation in us is the same; because the Authority is still of God speaking to us. And consequently to Dispute, Question or Resist what these deliver, is to Dispute and Resist either the Authority or Truth of God. Hence, because Christ commanded the Apostles to Preach his Gospel, promis'd to give them his Holy Spirit, establish'd them the Pastors of his Church, Solemnly engag'd that his Spirit should abide with them for ever to lead them into all Truth; that whoever heard them should hear him; that, not to them and his Church, should be the guilt of Heathenism; because, I say, of this Solemn Deputation and Commission from Christ, every Christian is bound to believe the Church of Christ to be Vested with a Divine Authority, that by the Spirit of God it delivers to us the Truths of God; and to except against what it Teaches, is to question the Truth of God. Here then is requir'd a ready Submission of the Judgment and Reason; because the Authority of God appears in the Delivery; and it can be no Matter of just Demerit, tho' the things deliver'd are not agreeable to Private Sentiments, nor suit-

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ble to our Imagination, and not to be comprehended by our Reason; because it is the Nature of Divine Mysteries to be thus Superior to us, and the Authority, which recommends them, is so Absolute, as to oblige us to an Assent, even where we do not see. This again may be call'd Blind Obedience, because it is Faith without Seeing; and yet there is Sight enough to make it a Free and Rational Act, since the Understanding sees Divine Motives, even the Authority of God, for its Submission. This Blindness then, has so much greater Comfort and Certainty in it, than what our own Reason can give from whatever, by its own Natural Light, it seems to comprehend, as the Authority of God's Truth is above the Certainty of Natural Reason. And what more than this can a Christian desire? Let then here again Presuming Men, fond of their own Reasoning, boast of their seeing by that Light, which their Reason gives; for my part, I had rather go on Blind under the Conduct and Authority of God, than trust in all the Reason and Learning in the World. And what is this, but only, that God is a surer Guide than Man? This is a Principle
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universally True and Secure ; and how much more so, in regard of those Truths, which are above the Comprehension, not only of Ordinary Reason, but of all the Learning of which it is capable in this Life ? Upon this Principle then our Understanding is to be cheerfully, and without exception, Obedient to God, and to those, whom he has commanded us to hear, as Vested with his Authority.

And not only our Understanding, but our Will, with all the Affections of it, ought in the same manner to be Obedient to God ; so that in whatever Particulars God has been pleas'd to manifest his Will to us, we are oblig'd to suppress all our own Inclinations and Desires, and entirely subject them to the Will of God. The Reason is, because the Will of God being Holy and Perfect, and the Will of Man perversely bent to Evil, we can have no other Means for preventing the Mischiefs of our own Corrupt Will, than by making the Will of God the Rule of ours. Upon this ground it is, that we are daily to offer this Petition to God, *Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven* : In which we beg, that the Will of God may be done in us ; that we may

may have at all times regard to the Divine Will, and seek to perform that, and not our own. Upon the same Principle it is, that all the Followers of the Gospel are oblig'd to Self-denials, since they cannot perform the Will of God, which is Holy, but by denying their own, that is Corrupt. And because there is a Stubbornness in our Will, which will not yield, but by force, hence arises the Necessity of Mortification, for bringing our selves into a more ready Subjection to the Divine Will; and those chuse the better part, who live in a perpetual Exercise of Self-denial and Obedience to a Superior, that so by the daily Contradiction of their own Will, they may be more ready in their Obedience to the Will of God: Since nothing can make us more ready in any Duty, than the daily Practice of it; and nothing can put us more out of the danger of an Enemy, than every Day to weaken him.

In this manner is our Understanding and Will to be Obedient to God, and nothing more than this can contribute to our Comfort and Peace here, or to our coming to the Kingdom of Eternal Peace. What then are we to ask this Day,

Day of God, but that he would please to take from us all Stubbornness and Self-conceit, that these Seeds of Rebellion being remov'd, we may entirely conform our Judgments to the Truths of God, and our Wills to his Precepts, without letting our own Private Thoughts be Argument enough for excepting against those, who are Commission'd by him to teach us.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

FROM what was said last Sunday, it must be evident to all, that no true Peace of Mind can be obtained without Obedience. Publick Peace cannot be maintain'd, but by Obedience to those, to whom it is due: So it is with the Peace of the Soul; if it does not know, what it is to be subject, and how to acquiesce in their Orders, to whom it is subject, it may have the Satisfaction of its own Will; but is so far out of the way of Peace, that nothing is to be expected, but Ruin. The Reason of this is, because there can be no True Peace of Mind, but from doing the Will of God. Confusion and War are from our own Will, but Peace

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is from the Will of God: Now God has so order'd it, that by Obedience, we are deliver'd from the Mischiefs of our own Will, and are taught to know and do the Will of God. Hence, that none may be Miserable, thro' the Effects of their own Will, all are commanded to be obedient; that so in the Will of God all may find Peace.

We no sooner come into the World, but our general Weakness makes Subjection necessary; we immediately perist, if we are left to our selves; and by being subject, we do the Will of God, as far as he requires of us. When Two or Three Years begin to lead us out of our Infancy, our danger is still from our selves, we begin to find, we have a Will of our own, and this being not capable of distinguishing, what is hurtful to us, we are under a Necessity of being subject, and by complying with that Subjection, we then do the Will of God. As we grow up, the Faculties of the Soul are improv'd; but from our Natural Corruption, our Will generally gets much the Start of our Understanding; whence we are more strongly bent upon what pleases our own Humor, than in considering what is Good and Advantageous to us.

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This is the Misfortune of all our Youth; and hence a general Fierceness, Rashness, immoderate Self-love and Vanity being the Attendants of these Years, there is still a Necessity of Subjection; and not only Nature and Law, but a Providential Mercy has put us under the Care of our Parents; these are set over us by the Order of God, to direct us; it is God commands us to be obedient to them; by this Obedience we do the Will of God; and by Disobedience, or undertaking any thing without Consulting them, without their Permission or Consent, we transgress the Order of God, depart from his Will, and are Disobedient to him.

When Maturity of Years and Judgment, or other Circumstances, have taken us from our Parents Care, yet still this Liberty is attended with Subjection, and has an Obedience annexed to it. Where-ever our Lot falls, we cannot pretend to exemption; it being the Condition of this Life in general, and not only of a Particular State. There is a Particular Tye indeed of Servants to Masters, and of Wives to Husbands; but where there is no such Engagements, yet still all are to be subject to
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Higher Powers. All are to be subject to the Temporal Government, all are to be subject to the Church. Thus it is constituted by God; and he requires it at our Hands; so that whatever Obedience we pay; it is an Obedience, not to Men only, but to God. Servants are requir'd to be Obedient to their Masters, as to Christ; not as Men-pleasers, but as the Servants of Christ, doing the Will of God from the Heart, doing Service as to the Lord, and not to Men, Ephes. 6. 5, 6, 7. Children are required to be obedient to their Parents: Children, obey your Parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord, Coloss. 3. 20. Wives are requir'd to be Obedient: Wives, submit your selves to your own Husbands, as to the Lord; for the Husband is Head of the Wife, even as Christ is Head of the Church: Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so let Wives be to their Husbands in every thing, Ephes. 5. 22, 23, 24. All are required to be Obedient to Higher Powers: Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Power, for there is no Power but of God; whosoever therefore resisteth Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God, Rom. 13. 1. All are requir'd to be Obedient to the Church: Obey them, that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves; for they watch for your Souls,

Souls, as they, that must give account, Heb. 13. 17. Tell the Church; but if he neglects to hear the Church, let him be to thee as a Heathen; Mat. 18. 17. He, that knoweth God, hears us; he that is not of God, hears not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error, 1 John 4. 6.

In this manner God has constituted the World, and by Obedience appointed Order and Good Disciplin to be maintain'd, not only in Private Families, but likewise in Nations, Kingdoms, and in the Church; and left this the General Means, by which all should come to the Knowledge of his Will, and to true Peace of Conscience. Hence all are to seek his Will in the manner, as he has ordain'd: Children from their Parents; Servants from their Masters; Wives from their Husbands; Subjects from their Magistrates, according to the respective Duties, in which God has commanded them to be subject to these; to whom, for this end, he has given Power over them; and, as to Faith, and the Doctrine of Christ, all are to seek the Will of God from the Church; because, tho' there are by God's Appointment, diversity of Families and Kingdoms, which

which are to be subject to their respective Heads and Rulers, as to the Civil and Political Government of them; yet since it is the Will of God, that all, thus divided, should be united in one Faith, this his Faith is not to be learnt from Masters or Rulers, but from his Church, which is but One, and in which he has commanded a Union of all; so that tho' there may be diversity of Civil Governments, yet there is to be a Union of all in Belief. For which end, we see the Apostles were sent by Christ into all Nations, and the Command of Hearing and Believing them was given alike to all. *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature: He, that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he, that believes not, shall be damn'd, Mark 16. 15. One Body, One Spirit, even as you are call'd in One Hope; One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God and Father of all, Ephes. 4. 4.*

Thus is our Obedience to have different regards, according to the Subjection God requires of us, and according to the Intimation he has given us, for the knowledge of his Will in our different Duties. And this Obedience is not Arbitrary, or left to our Discretion, but it is Absolute; because, tho' the

the Persons, to whom we are subject are no more than Creatures; yet the Power, which they have, is from God. *There is no Power, but of God*; and therefore the Obedience, requir'd above by the Apostle, is to be given, *Sicut Christo; sicut servi Christi; sicut Domino*. As to Christ; as the Servants of Christ, as to our Lord: And the Disobedience is declar'd to be *Resisting the Ordinance of God*. Whence all, that are in any Subjection; that is, all may see, how great their Obligation of Obedience is, that it is God demands it of them; that it is to be paid as to God; that the Breach of it is Resisting God. These are Points, which ought to be consider'd by Christians, as being of the greatest Concern to them, and therefore not to be transgress'd upon every Humor or Provocation; but to be observ'd with Fidelity, as to God; and tho' the Persons, to whom this Obedience is due, may, thro' any suppos'd or real unworthiness, seem not to deserve it; yet since God demands the Obedience, and his Power may be in Persons otherwise undeserving, as it was in the Scribes and Pharisees, it is not to be denied them, and their Unworthiness can be no Dispensation for our Obedience.

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But however, there is some difference in the Obedience exacted from us: For tho' the Command be Absolute, of obeying those, who are in Power from God, as Parents, Masters, Rulers; yet this is to be understood, when they command according to the Power, which they have receiv'd from God: For, *First*, If they command such things, as are evidently contrary to the Law of God; in this case the Apostle enjoins us to obey God rather than Man. *2dly*. If what they require of us be evidently contrary to the Commands of a Higher Power, to which they are Subordinate; for here their Authority being only Ministerial, they cannot have Power of commanding contrary to those, whose Ministers they are. *3dly*. If what they command, evidently exceeds their Commission, and regard such things, in which God has not subjected us to them; for in this Case the Power pretended is Usurpation, and this brings no Tie upon their Consciences, who otherwise are subject to them. But this is to be understood, only when there is Evidence in these Particulars; for if the Case be Doubtful, both Divines and Lawyers agree, that *Malior est Condicio Possidentis*, They that

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are in Possession of Power, have the better Title, and Right is to be presum'd on their Side. Whence all those must be esteem'd Criminal, both before God and Man, who, upon their own Private Opinions, or upon Objections rais'd either by their own Doubts, or of others, disturb the Order of Families, of the Civil Government, or of the Church: For where God requires an Absolute Obedience, his Command ought to over-rule all such Doubts; and if it does not, it is because Pride, Stubbornness or Self-conceit stand in the way, and the Guilt can be nothing less than Sedition or Schism; both which are set down by the Apostle, as Crimes that exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let therefore all who are subject, peaceably remain in that Order of Subjection in which God has placed them; and not permit Ambition, or the Love of Novelty, to deceive them under the Colour of Conscience.

It is no less than God himself has establish'd Government, and requires Obedience both in Families; and in the State, and in his Church; and that in Human Affairs nothing can be so done, but it may be liable to the Exception of Prejudice,

Prejudice, Passion, Envy, Jealousie, or Ambition; nay, tho' there may be many Abuses, such as Piety and Equity may be zealous to reform; yet this is no Warrant for those, who are Subjects, to set up a Standard against the Power that is over them; for if the Aggrievances are real, and such as cannot be approv'd, yet they are to be tolerated still with Patience; and if modest Remonstrances are without effect; they are to wait till God is pleas'd to change the Hearts of the Rulers, or raise up such, who by his own Power may reform the Scandals, by which his Power has been abus'd. God's positive Ordinance seems a Barr against all other Attempts: And tho' it should be done with that unusual Success, as to have Corruptions reform'd, or Aggrievances redress'd; yet the Loss is still much greater than the Gain; since the most considerable Reformati^ons, can have no proportion to that One Mischief, of breaking in upon the Church; this being a Precedent which lays the Undertakers ever after open to the Attempts of all those, whose Ambition, or mistaken Zeal, gives them hopes of Success; and thus endless Confusion becomes the Fruit of their Rashness, who could not for a time bear Abuses.

O God, since thou hast laid such an Obligation of Obedience upon us, give us Grace to satisfy this Duty; that no Passion of ours may carry us over those Bounds, which thou hast fixt for the Common Peace. Grant that in Families, in State, and in Church, all may have the Sense of what thou hast ordain'd, and that no Inconveniencies, no Blind Zeal or Ambition, may persuade us to dispence with the Obedience which thou hast enjoin'd.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

UPON the Principles already laid down, it appears, how great is the Danger of Sin, in disturbing the Order of Government, which God has establish'd in Families, and in the State; and that tho' there may be Cases, in which Obedience is not due, yet there is such *Evidence* necessary in these Cases, that 'tis easily being deceiv'd thro' Rashness or Passion; and we may be surpriz'd in the Guilt of the greatest Crimes, by being too forward in taking the Dispensations, which these offer. This is much more so, in Religious Families, where the Tie of Obedience being

being so much stricter, there cannot be easily sufficient Evidence for Disputing Authority; and consequently the Suggestions to all such Scandalous Controversies, are more to be suspected of Passion.

And is it not then much more so in the Church of Christ, in regard of all Matters of Faith? For, where-ever this Church be, if Christ has commanded all to believe, there is such a Church, by making this an Article of our Creed; if he ordain'd this Church for reaching the whole World the Truth of his Gospel; if he commanded all to hear and believe this Church, under the Penalty of reputed Heathenism and Damnation; if, for making good the Testimony of the Church, he declar'd it the Purchase of his Blood, own'd himself the Head of it, the Corner-stone and Foundation, solemnly engag'd his Word, that the Holy Spirit should lead it into all Truth to the end of the World, and abide with it for ever, and hence publish'd it to the whole World, to be the Ground and Pillar of Truth; if, I say, the Church of Christ was thus founded, thus establish'd, thus secur'd in Truth, by the Superintendency of the Holy Ghost, and the Promise of

the Eternal Truth, as is attested in Holy Writ, in plain, positive and express Terms; how great must be the Obligation upon all of hearing and believing what it teaches? And from whence can there be *Evidence* sufficient for calling in question what it delivers, or refusing Assent to its Doctrines? From whence can arise this *Evidence*?

If Private Interpretation of Holy Writ moves Difficulties; if Learned Men of Reputed Piety, and Exemplar Lives, raise Objections; if a National Synod, or any Particular Church, from their Exposition of Scripture, censure and condemn its Doctrines; here will be Objections, 'tis true, and such as may give disturbance to private Reason, at the first surprize at least; but when the Point is consider'd; What is the Authority of these Objections, to the Evidence of God's Command of Believing, and express Promise of Truth, which are on the other side? VVhat is the Authority of Private or National Reason, against the Authority and Truth of God? VVhat must Reason do, upon the proposal of this Question? If it be over-rul'd by Education or Interest, it may be unwilling to yield, and find Topics, for keeping up the Controversie.

troverſie: But if it be left to that Natural Light, which God has given it, it muſt ſee a Neceſſity of confeſſing, That the Authority of God's Command, of his Truth and his Promiſe, is above all the Objection of Private or National Reaſon; and that the Submiſſion, which he requires, cannot be in Reaſon refus'd upon ſuch Objections.

But why may not the ſame Rule be follow'd in regard of the Church, as in reſpect of all other Lawful Authorities? Obedience is regularly due to theſe; and yet if they command any thing contrary to the Law of God, they are not to be obey'd: If then the Church be found, to teach contrary to the Word of God, why may it not be lawful, nay, why is it not a Duty, to diſſent from her? The Scripture will not allow this Caſe to be ſuppos'd; becauſe tho' all other Authorities have Obedience due to them; yet thoſe, who are veſted with ſuch Power, having no Promiſe of God, to ſecure them from ſaying Unlawful Commands, they may be ſo blinded with Paſſion, as to require of their Subjects, what is abſolutely contrary to the Law of God, and the Truth of the Goſpel; but it is not ſo

with the Church of Christ; for this being founded by Christ, for teaching the Truth of his Gospel, and being every way qualified for this end, by the Promised Assistance of Christ and his Holy Spirit abiding with her for ever to lead her into all Truth, how can she be found teaching contrary to the Word of God? And if any Persons or Nations expound the Scripture contrary to what she teaches, is not the Divine Establishment of the Church, and the Promise of God made to her, enough to make such Interpreters condemn themselves of Presumption, for going contrary to the Church, rather than Condemn the Church of Error, for teaching contrary to them?

But however, if we suppose, at present, the Church to be upon the level with other Authorities, and like them, subject to Error; yet whence will the Evidence appear, of the Church teaching contrary to the Truth of God's Word, which Case alone can be a Warrant for not receiving what she teaches? If Private Persons, or a National Church, interpret the Scripture, in a Sense contrary to what the Church delivers, where is the Evidence of their being in the right? It must be
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own'd by all, that the Words of Scripture may be thus differently interpreted, and that one Interpretation seems Right to one, and the Contrary Sense to another; but this carries nothing of Evidence with it of the Truth, and has no more in it, than *This seems so to me*; which is not enough for refusing Obedience to those, who are in the Possession of any lawful Power.

If the Authority of Learned and Sober Men is found to confirm the Interpretation of Scripture contrary to what the Church teaches; and it cannot be imagin'd, that such Men, whose Learning and Moral Virtue raise them above the Suspicion of Mistake or Interest, should maintain such Doctrine, did they not see it to be the Right; yet this brings no Evidence to the Case; for if the Church be consider'd, it will presently appear, that in her Communion are far greater Numbers of Men, no ways Inferior to these in Learning and Virtue, who believe the Exposition deliver'd by the Church to be the Genuin Sense of the H. Scripture, and venture their Salvation on this belief. Now where can the Evidence be of the Former being in the Right; since whatever their Authority be, there is a

great Authority on the other side? For tho' put in the Scales alone it has truly Weight; yet when the other is set in the other part of the Balance, it does not now outweigh, but is only upon the level; and how then can there be Evidence from such Authority sufficient for withdrawing from the Obedience commanded by God, to be given to the Church?

If the Authority of many Reverend Bishops assembled in Synod, and of a National Church, be produced asserting those Expositions of Holy VVrit, contrary to what the Church gives; yet this again is no Evidence of the Doctrine of the Church being Contrary to God's VVord, because there are many more, and much greater, Assemblies of as Reverend Bishops, which have declar'd the Doctrines of the Church to be agreeable to the H. Scripture, and to be the true Sense of what is there deliver'd. So that if the Authority of the first mention'd Assemblies seems to be sufficient Evidence of what they teach, if heard and consider'd alone by themselves, yet it cannot be esteem'd so, when it is confronted by a Greater Authority, depositing upon their Salvation quite contrary to them.

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If Appeal be made to Antiquity and to the Primitive Fathers, and many Texts are produced out of these in favor of those Expositions of Holy VVrit, contrary to the Doctrine of the Church: Here again is no Evidence to determine the Point in debate; because as many and fuller Texts are produced out of the same Primitive Fathers, asserting those very Doctrines, which are taught by the Church.

If the Authority of Learned Men, or of a National Church, declares the the Doctrines of the Church to be Innovations, shews the time of their being first introduced and impos'd upon the World; yet this again is no Evidence; because there is a greater Authority declaring the Contrary; even the Authority of the Pastors of the Church then Assembled, when these very Points were first call'd in question, and upon due Examination declaring, and with their Salvation engag'd in the Truth of what they declar'd, that these Doctrines were such as the Church then believ'd, and had been deliver'd down to them, as the Sense of the Scriptures, and the Doctrine of the Apostles.

Thus whatever Head be consider'd,
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there is no Evidence of the Doctrines of the Church being Contrary to God's Word; all that can be justly pretend- ed, is, that there are Difficulties and Objections rais'd against the Doctrines of the Church; and so there are against the most Fundamental Principles of Christianity, and against the Bible it self: But what then? Are Doctrines presently to be Condemn'd, because there are Objections against them? Give these Objections their whole force; nay, let us suppose them abet- ted by an Authority (which yet is not) equal to that of the Church; yet still this does no more, than make the Case Doubtful; for Equals against Equals is no Evidence, but only make things Dubious. And now, if there be no Legal Title upon Earth which is made Void, by being made Doubt- ful; if there be no Legal Authority upon Earth, which, upon Doubts or Objections, can be Disobey'd and Re- sist'd without Sin; how much more Unwarrantable and Sinful must it be, to Disobey and Resist the Church of Christ, only upon Doubts mov'd against her, when she is founded and secur'd by better Promises, than any other Autho- rity whatever? Nothing but Evidence will

will justify in other Cases, how then can less do here?

Well, but if the Case be render'd Doubtful, why is not this as bad for the Church, as for those, that oppose her Doctrines? It is not; because the Church was establish'd by Christ to teach all, and he commanded all to hear and believe her; and being Vested with this Authority, it stands good (abstracting from all Promises) till there be Evidence of her having forfeited the Right, that was given her; and till then, all are oblig'd to hear and submit to her Doctrines, in Virtue of the first Command: For if Doubts and Objections mov'd by Subjects were warrant enough for their Disobedience, how would this unhang all Governments, and lay open the whole World to Confusion? Let but the Case be put in any Civil Power, and the Case is clear; for what would be Sedition or Rebellion here, must certainly be Schism in the Church.

But which is this Church? Till this be prov'd, we are no nearer the end of this Debate. The Debate it self clears this Point; for while all agree, which was the Primitive and True Church of Christ, and refuse Obedience to her at present,

present, upon this Plea only, of her having forfeited her Primitive Right by Invocations and Errors, all in this declare, which this Church is: And as her Primitive Authority is acknowledged, so in all the Justice of Common Reason and Law it must stand good, till the Doubts mov'd against her, are rais'd to the degree of Evidence. This cannot be done, as has been shewn, from the Common Heads press'd against her, tho' we abstract from all the Promises of Christ; and if now we add these, to fortifie her Title, That Christ, who is the unerring Truth, promis'd to be with her to the end of the VWorld, to lead her into all Truth, and commanded all to hear her under the Penalty of Damnation, here the Truth, Providence and Goodness of God are so strongly engag'd, that all the Attempts against his Church seem nothing less than the Presumption of Human Reason against God, for overthrowing a Constitution, which his Infinite VVildom has founded, and evaluating, in effect, his inseparable Attributes of Goodness and Truth, upon which his Church stands, and which are its Security for Teaching Truth to the Consummation of the World. In-
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finest Thanks are due to Thee, O God, who requiring us to believe thy Church, hast given us such Security for our Faith: Thy Truth is not weaken'd by those, who refuse to believe; but grant them a Sense of their Injustice, who divest thy Church of the Authority thou hast given it, upon such a Plea, as no Court would allow against the meanest Title upon Earth.

Ascension-Day.

THIS Day's Mystery is the Ascension of our Blessed Redeemer into Heaven; and in this we see the Reward of that Obedience of which we have hitherto spoken; Christ humbled himself, and became Obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross; wherefore God also has highly Exalted him, Phil. 2. 8. This the Apostle speaks upon another Occasion; but it is likewise true in this, that the Meritorious Cause of Christ's Ascension, was because he became Obedient in all things, to his Father's Will, and that therefore God has Exalted him: So says S. Chrysostome on this Epistle: *Extremam Christum præstitit*

præstitit Obedientiam, propterea accepit & supremum honorem. Christ stoop'd to the lowest degree of Obedience, therefore is he rais'd to the highest degree of Honor.

In which we have Encouragement enough for complying with that Obedience, which God demands of us, either immediately to himself, in the Observance of his VVill and Commandments, or to others, to whom he has given Power over us; there being no one Act of Obedience, but, if perform'd in the Spirit of Christ, will Associate us with Christ Ascending, and Exalt us with him. This Almighty God has sufficiently testified in Holy Scripture, by declaring, how acceptable Obedience is to him. *First*, In acknowledging, That Obedience is better than Sacrifice; and to give ear to him, rather than to offer the Fat of Rams. *2dly*, In the plentiful Blessing he gave to *Abraham*, and owning it all to be the Effect of his Obedience, *Gen. 22. 16.* *3dly*, In requiring no other Condition from the *Israelites* for being his People, than that of Obedience only, *Jer. 4. 4.* Lastly, in Christ proposing the same only Condition to his Followers; *Yea, says he, are my Friends,*

if you do the things which I command you,
Jo. 15. 14.

These and many other Arguments God has given us in Holy Writ, to invite us to the Obedience, which he demands of us, and to encourage us, to break thro' whatever Difficulties we meet with in satisfying this Duty. There are great Difficulties in the Obedience to his own Law, whilst natural Corruption raises an Aversion to it, and the great Torrent of the World carries us another way. There is Difficulty in submitting with a ready Assent to the Faith he teaches, whilst our Curiosity and Pride are never willing to receive upon Credit; and pretending to know all things, are not easie in bearing that humbling Conviction of their own Blindness, in acknowledging the Truth of such Mysteries, of which they know nothing. There is difficulty again in our Obedience to those, who have a Superiority over us, especially when their Command suit not with our Humor or Interest, when any disagreeable Imperiousness accompanies their Orders, or when Passion has rais'd a Jealousie of their Aversion towards us; in these and many other unlucky Circumstances, Pride prompts us to Rebellion,

bellion, and is Ingenious in finding Arguments for disputing their Power. And this is not only the Case of Subjects in regard of Magistrates and Higher Powers, but likewise of Religious and Private Families, and is the Gate, by which the Devil, who first became Miserable by Pride and Disobedience, brings Confusion into the best order'd Constitutions; and from inconsiderable and unsuspected Beginnings raises insensibly such Divisions, as draw Infinite Numbers into the Partnership of his Misery.

But whatever the Difficulties of Obedience be, God still commands us to be Obedient, and we have no other way of ascending to him, but by the strict Observance of this Duty; the Difficulties therefore of it are not to be our Dispensation; for since Christ became Obedient even to Death, and, as S. Bernard says, *Dedit vitam, ne perderet Obedientiam*; laid down his Life, that he might not be wanting in his Obedience, he ought to be our Example amidst the daily Difficulties, which discourage us; and he having given us this Instruction, that we ought rather to forfeit our Life than our Obedience, how must we conclude it our much
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greater Obligation, to part with our Pride, our Humor, and our Interest, rather than refuse Obedience, where he has commanded us to obey? This Point admits of no Dispute; for certainly these our Inclinations, which of themselves are Evil, can never be a good Plea against Duty; and if in favor of them, or by the violence of their Impressions, we quit the Obligation God has laid upon us, we, for the time, renounce all the Hopes he has given us, of Ascending with Christ.

Hence all, that undertake here to be the Followers of Christ, see the Necessity of not departing from his Steps. If they are sensible, who have Power over them, they cannot but hence know, 'tis their Duty to be Obedient to them; and this for Conscience sake, because it is the Will of God it should be so; and they can no other way hope to be Obedient to God, if they obey not those, who have Authority over them. And this is not only to be, when they act the Part of Friends more than of Superiors, and Command in such a Moderate Way, as to Sweeten all their Commands with Mildness, and make Obedience Grateful; but also when the disagreeableness of their Haughtiness

Haughty, Passionate or Wasplish Temper alienates all Affection from them, and provokes to Contradiction, Stubbornness or Rebellion. Here in these Circumstances is the proper Trial of Obedience; and in these our most Industrious Endeavors must be to suppress all those Motions, which incline us to rebel, and without any Expressions of dislike, to bow down to God in the Superior, and with the same cheerfulness, accept his Commands, as if not he, but God, only were there. This is the Obedience according to the Spirit of Christ; and if Servants, Minors, and others in Subjection, were but sensible, of the great Advantage they might make, by readily obeying in these ungrateful Circumstances, they would not so easily permit Passion to prevail, and make them there Losers, where the opportunity of Gain is so great.

The Gain that might be, are many Degrees of Ascending towards God by Virtue of Obedience, and these the more considerable, the more Difficulties there are in performing it. For when we do any thing in Obedience to the Commands of another, we gain so much upon our own Will, by this Subjection to another's; and if we con-

tinue

continue this Obedience, even where ill Humor, Jealousies and Resentments, with strong Arguments, dissuade from it, here is in this such a Victory over our own Will, that there cannot be apprehended much danger from it in any other Case, which was thus governable in this. Hence the Wise Man says; *Vir Obediens loquetur Victorias.* The Obedient Man will speak Victories, *Prov. 23. 28.* Because where the Will is subject, there must be Triumphs over Hell; whilst Self-Will not govern'd, is that alone which brings Captive Souls into that Place of Torments. This then is a great Step towards God, since a Christian, that has his own Will under him, is in this rais'd above himself, and all that is Earthly.

Another Step is, that Obedience, divesting us of our own Wills, substitutes God's Will in the place, by which we come to be directed and govern'd, not by our own Will, which is Corrupt, but by the Will of God, which is Holy. For whether we obey God immediately in observing his Precepts, or obey those, to whom we are subject, we still do the Will of God, whose Will it is we should thus obey. And what nearer approach can there be to

God

God in this Life, than thus suspending the usurpt Jurisdiction of our own Corruption, and giving the Power into the Hand of God, with a universal Submission to him? This is what we daily pray for in those Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, when we say; *Thy Kingdom come; thy Will be done on Earth, as it is Heaven*: For then our Souls are made the Kingdom of God, when not our own, but God's Will rules in us. And when is this, but when, considering the Will of God, we are ever Zealous to be directed by it, without any regard to those perverse Inclinations, which press us to take a contrary Way? And while not only Masters, and all in Power, have this Way open before them, by seeking in all things the Will of God, and doing it; but all in subjection too, by cheerfully embracing the Commands of their Superiors, as the Will of God to them, all are in such a Way, in which they may Trample under Foot their own Corruption, and Ascending with Christ, enter into the Participation of his Joy.

That this may be done most effectually let the Conditions be consider'd, which will render Obedience most acceptable to God. *First*, It ought to be Cheerful, and

and therefore without Murmuring, without Sowness, or any Signs of Discontent. 2^{dly}, It ought to be Pure, in faithfully performing what is order'd, not for Fear or Interest, or any Human Respects, but as considering the Will of God, and endeavoring to please him. 3^{dly}, It ought to be Ready, and without Delay. 4^{thly}, It ought not to consider the Qualities of the Person, who Commands, either as to Birth, Learning, Capacity, Affection, &c. If he be in Power, that is enough; for he commands not, what is evidently contrary to Duty. Lastly, It ought not to be too Busy in Reasoning upon the Motives or Ends of the Command, nor too Nice as to the Means of accomplishing it. These are Conditions, which belong to a strict Obedience, and are such, as will generally render Obedience valuable with God. But where Circumstances are so, as in a Married State where the Concern is Common, and the Duty of Obeying is Mixt with a Duty of Preserving what is to be the Support of Family: Here may be sometimes Reason for Delays to prevent the Mischiefs of Rash Commands, by waiting the season of a better Humor, wherein to perswade to more Considerate

derate Resolutions. But while this must be allow'd, yet no Advantage is to be made of it, in favor of Pride, Stubbornness, Ill Humor, or Indiscretion; for this will be to abuse Liberty, and to open a Door to Unhappiness.

Having here shewn the Way that leads to God, even the Way, which Christ both by Doctrine and Example has taught us, and a Way open to all, grant, O Jesus, who art our Powerful Advocate with the Father, that we may follow thee in thy own Way. Obtain for us that Grace, by which we may master all that Pride, Stubbornness and Self-conceit, which make us Fond of our own Thoughts and Ways, that being disengag'd from these unhappy Bonds, we may become sincerely Obedient to thy Precepts, and to all those, to whom we are subject; and be thus in Preparation of Ascending with thee; and by doing the Will of God on Earth, may enter into a more perfect Union with him in Heaven.

Sunday

Sunday *within the* Octave of A-
scension.

THE Apostles having seen Christ Ascending to his Heavenly Father from the Top of *Mount Olivet*, and standing with their Eyes fixt on that Cloud, which had taken him out of their Sight, two Angels appear to them for settling their disturb'd Minds, divided by the Violence of two Extreames, of Joy for their Master's Glory, and of Grief for their own Loss. These Angels, with a Mild Reproof, question them for standing there looking up towards Heaven, and put them in Mind, that Jesus, whom they had seen Ascending, would return again in the same manner to Judge the World. Upon which the Apostles understanding, that they were not to lose time in fruitless Resentments for the Absence of the Lord, but apply their whole Endeavors in preparing for his Second Coming, forthwith obey the Summons, and returning to *Jerusalem*, there wait the Accomplishment of Christ's Words, in the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which he had promis'd to send them. D This

This is the first Effect of the Ascension of the Son of God upon the Apostles, to render them more Docil and more Obedient to the Voice of Heaven; and carries with it a double Instruction to all the Faithful: *First*, To let Obedience, and a Docil, Humble Mind, take place of all other seeming and more agreeable Exercises. Nothing seems more desirable to well dispos'd Souls, than quiet Prayer, and the Contemplation of Heavenly things; and yet if the Will of God calls another Way, they must, with the Apostles looking towards Heaven, leave the Solitude of the Mount, and go to the City, there to attend whatever more Uneasie Exercises, Providence has ordain'd for them. The bent therefore of the most Pious Inclinations is not to be consider'd; but the Will of God alone, in whatever Way it shall manifest it self; and no degree of Grief is to be indulg'd, tho' the present Intimation of Heaven proves the Disappointment of some most Religious Design; for that the meanest Offices, undertaken by the direction of the Divine Will, are sanctified by this Choice, and are more Beneficial to the Humble Soul, than whatever else could be perform'd,

form'd, tho' in it self much more Perfect, by the Choice of the most Pious Inclination. By this all Christians are taught, what ought to be the Liberty of their Souls; that tho' we are to be encourag'd, to deliberate and make Proposals of what may be most for our Advantage, and be Industrious in pursuing such Designs; yet this ought ever to be with a Salvo to the Divine Will; so that if God shall permit an Interruption, or wholly disable us in the Prosecution, we are with all possible Freedom of Mind to submit; not letting our own Will be a Barr to the Execution of God's, and industriously giving a Check to all kind of Peevishness, Ill Humor or Impatience, which are the Effects of a Rebellious Pride and Self-love, which cannot bear Contradiction, tho' from the Hand of God, but with Expressions of dislike. This Freedom is the Effect of the Divine Spirit Working the Soul into a Subjection to God, and laying all things of this World upon the level; so that it readily embraces Sickness, Temptations, Spiritual Driness, Interruptions, Disappointments, Death, &c. with the same cheerfulness of Faith, tho' not of Nature, as other more sensible

Comforts ; because the Joy of Faith, is in the Accomplishment of the Will of God ; and where ever this appears, there Faith makes no Distinction ; it knows, its only Happiness here is in fulfilling his Will ; and as this makes all things equally valuable in themselves, so likewise equally desirable to the Soul that seeks not it self, but God.

The Practice of this Lesson is not so easie , as the Speculation ; because of the general Weakness of Faith, and the Strength of Nature. But however, so much we have certain ; that the Power of Grace is above Nature, and that many Souls, for fulfilling the Will of God, have cheerfully embraced all that is ungrateful to Nature ; that tho' there be great difficulty in it ; yet that all may be done, thro' God, that comforts us. If this be certain, then 'tis likewise certain, we can have no excuse for all that Peevishness, Moroseness and Impatience, which are affected or indulg'd by us, as often as we meet with Disappointments, are thwarted in our Proposals, or put out of our own Way. It is true, Natural Constitution may incline to these Disorders ; but what then ? Is Nature a sufficient Plea for going out of the Way ? If this could be allow'd, then

Octave of Ascension. 77

then all Sinners would be justified. Whence we may be assur'd, that our Weakness ought not to be made our Excuse, but our Motive, for using all possible Means for overcoming it; and tho' the entire Victory may be the Priviledge of few; yet that none can pretend to true Piety, who daily experience Weakness in themselves, and do not use Means for overcoming it.

A Second Instruction to all the Faithful, is, That in all the Occasions of Grief, they ought to be watchful against every Degree of Excess: *First*, For the Reason already mention'd; because in all such Occasions, Faith discerns the Will of God, and an Humble Submission being due to this, Immoderate Grief cannot be tolerated, which has neither Humility nor Submission in it. If Nature therefore will not presently yield, yet Reason must; and this being once fully sensible of its Duty, it will soon use Force upon Nature, and bring it into Subjection to that which is above it. *2dly*. For the Reason given by the Angels to the Apostles; these had as sensible a Loss in the departure of their Lord from them, as can possibly happen upon Earth; and yet no time is indulg'd them to grieve; the same Mo-

ment, which took him from them, puts them in mind, that he would return again to Judge the World, and requires them to suspend all Grief, and to go and prepare for Judgment. The same is the Case of all without exception: Whatever their present Loss be, which inclines them to grieve; yet they have a much greater Loss to apprehend, which is the Loss of God, and this demands all their Care for its prevention. How then can it be reasonable, to give up the Soul to grieve, for the Loss of what must be lost, when such Grief is not capable of recovering what is already lost, and puts the Soul in hazard of losing that, which is Eternal? Those, who have had any experience of Grief, cannot but be sensible of the many Mischiefs of it, in putting such a Clog upon the Soul, as to render it incapable of all those Exercises, by which it is to seek God, and prepare for the Possession of him; they know, Heaven can be no part of the Concern, while the whole Soul and Thought looking back upon what is gone, sees nothing before it: And therefore cannot wonder if Grief be forbid to those who are to prepare for Judgment. I wish all others would be convinc'd of it, without the help of
their

their own Experience; and upon this Conviction, be watchful against all the approaches of this deceitful Passion; this steadiness would be a commendation of their Reason and Faith; for nothing can be more reasonable, than to keep that at a distance, which is most prejudicial to their greatest Interest; and nothing more agreeable to Faith, than to renounce that Injustice, which involves a preference of that, which is now nothing, to God himself, and is fullen to all the Incomprehensible Happiness, which he promises, because the present Satisfaction is taken out of its Hands.

With these two Lessons the Apostles are sent from *Mount Olivet* to *Jerusalem*, there to wait the coming of the Holy Ghost; and these Lessons being given them from Heaven, it cannot be question'd, but that due Endeavours for the observance of them, in a quiet surrender of our selves at all times to the disposition of Heaven, so as not only to acknowledge in God an over-ruling Power, but likewise to acquiesce in this Power, in whatever way it shall dispose of us, without fullen Grief, or fretful Resentments; it cannot be question'd, I say, but that due Endeavours

vors for the Observance of these Lessons will be the most assured Argument of our Souls being already under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the most Effectual Means, for obliging him to a more perfect Communication, even to come and dwell in our Hearts.

But this more especially, if we add the other Preparations of the Apostles mention'd in the first Chapter of the *Acts*; *Who persever'd all in One Spirit in Prayer*, v. 14. All in one Spirit, and all in Prayer: In this manner were they waiting, whom God design'd to fill with the First Fruits of the Holy Ghost; we cannot have a better Model, than this which stands recorded in the Word of God, for our Instruction. And since, now the time approaches, when we are to renew the Memory of the Holy Ghost descending upon the Apostles, and we cannot but be convinc'd, thro' the sad Effects of our own Weakness, how much we stand in need of being strengthn'd by this Holy Spirit; what can we do better, than prepare our Hearts, in the same manner as the Apostles did, that so, with them, we may have the Holy Ghost pour'd forth in our Hearts, there to become our Teacher, our Life, and our Strength? The

The Apostles persever'd in Prayer; if we expect the same Blessing with them, we are to ask it in Prayer, and not only ask it, but persevere in asking: We are to humble our selves in the Consideration of our manifold Weakness, and confessing our only Help to be from God, solicit him to send forth his Holy Spirit upon us, that by him we may be supported amidst all the Dangers of Life, and be enabled in the Performance of those great Duties, which he exacts from us, those Duties, which are too great for us, as being above the Spirit of Man, above the Strength of Nature, of Learning, of Wit, and of all Human Abilities, and can be only the Effect of his Holy Spirit abiding in us, and quick'ning us with a Supernatural Strength, such as is capable of overcoming the Devil, and the World, and all that Corruption, which we have within us. See, Christians, what ought to be your Employment at this time; not only on this Day, but every Day, like the Apostles, till the Accomplishment of that time, when God sends down his Holy Spirit upon such, as shall be then found prepar'd to receive him? The Blessing is of Infinit Value, and you have to

great an Interest in it, that it is worth all the Preparation you are able to make for it. But then see, your Prayer be accompanied with Charity ; disengage your Hearts from all Malice and Anger, remove all Dissention, make Peace with every Neighbor, forgiving every one from your Hearts whatever they have done against you, that so your Breasts being thus compos'd, they may become fit Abodes for the God of Peace.

Thus, O God, is thy Goodness not only Fruitful in Blessings, but Merciful also in teaching us, how to receive the Benefit of them ; grant, that at present we may make Advantage of this Mercy, and be so truly Industrious in preparing our Souls, that we may not only Celebrate the Memory of past Mercies, but find them renew'd in us, by receiving the Holy Ghost, who may be to us the beginning of a New Life : Protect us under all the Difficulties of this present, and Conduct us to the Possession of a better, which shall never end.

Whit Sunday.

ON this Day, and on the whole *O-
ctave*, a Principal Employment of
all Christians ought to be, in opening
their Hearts towards Heaven, and by
servent Prayers and Tears importuning
God to pour forth his Holy Spirit up-
on them. Those, who cannot per-
swade themselves to be truly serious in
this Exercise, have too much grounds
to suspect their State; since to be in
want of help, and not to seek it; to be in
the Way to Eternity, and not to be So-
licitous to prevent a Miscarriage, be-
trays such a want of Reason and Faith,
that there needs nothing more to give a
Christian a dislike of himself, and to
make him fear, that whatever he be
call'd, he has no real Principles of the
Gospel in him. To send up Petitions
therefore to Heaven, for imploring
the Communication of the Holy Spirit
to us, is what all are oblig'd to; be-
cause in the Holy Ghost is our Life,
our Strength, our Light, our Comfort,
and the general Supply of whatever
helps are here necessary for us, in order
to a better Life; and this being the
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general Concern of all, it ought to be the Subject of the Devotion of all: And those who join not in it, need no other Proof of their not being at present what they ought to be, and that, without a great Change, they are never like to become the Eternal Temples of the Holy Ghost, whom they have here despis'd.

This I say to those who have already receiv'd the Holy Ghost in Confirmation; but as for those, who have not yet had the benefit of this Sacrament, it is not enough for these to Pray for the Communication of the Holy Spirit; for God, in his Mercy, having ordain'd a more Effectual Means, in the Sacrament of Confirmation, these cannot well be in earnest in desiring the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, if they seek it not in that way, which God has appointed, for their more Effectual obtaining it.

Not that Confirmation is to be number'd amongst those Sacraments, without which none can be sav'd; but it is however such, as ought to be omitted by none: For since it is an Institution of the Divine Goodness, by which the Blessings of Heaven are so plentifully Communicated to the Faithful, there

there ought to be no Negligence in approaching to it ; but what has been so mercifully ordain'd for the Sanctification of all, ought, with earnestness, to be desir'd by all. Whence *S. Clement*, who liv'd with the Apostles, says ; All, without delay, ought to hasten to Baptism, and then to be sign'd by the Bishop ; that is, receive the Seven-fold Grace of the Holy Ghost ; since he cannot be a Perfect Christian, who, not by Necessity, but carelessly or wilfully Neglects this Sacrament, as we have receiv'd it from Blessed *Peter*, and the other Apostles have taught, according to the Doctrin of Christ. *Ep. 4.*

The Consideration of the Effects of this Sacrament will excuse all farther Arguments on this Subject : The first of these is to perfect the Grace receiv'd in Baptism ; so that, whereas in Baptism we become the Children of God, in Confirmation we receive the Strength of Men : In Baptism we are List'd under the Standard of Christ, by Confirmation we are Arm'd to Fight : In Baptism we are Regenerated to Life, by Confirmation we are Strengthen'd to Battel ; we are deliver'd from the Tenderness of Infants, and fitted to engage with the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, and

to confess the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ amidst the Terrors of the Severest Persecution, even of Racks and Death. Thus is the Effect of this Sacrament describ'd by the Primitive Bishop and Martyr *Melchisedes*. *Ep. ad Ep. Hiss.* c. 2. And the first Proof of it was seen in the Apostles; who were so Fearful in the time of Christ's Passion, as to run away and leave him in the Hands of the *Jews*; and after his Ascension, had not Courage to appear in Public, but remain'd shut up for fear of the *Jews*; and yet, when the Holy Ghost had descended upon them at *Pentecost*, they were so animated by this Spirit, that they Preach'd the Gospel both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and were so little Apprehensive of Suffering, that what hitherto they had fear'd, is now become the Subject of their Glory; and they went away from the Council, rejoicing, that they were esteem'd worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ, *Acts* 5. 41.

Besides this, there is another Effect, which is that of imprinting a Character in the Soul, which ever abides in it, as a Mark of its having been Consecrated to the Warfare of Christ: This is, as it were, a Seal of the Covenant made with God;

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God ; and of this the Apostle seems to speak, when he says, *God has sealed us,* 2 Cor. 1. 22. and this being unchangeable, hence the Sacrament of Confirmation can never be receiv'd by any Person, but once, without violence to the Institution.

Having touch'd at the Effects of this Sacrament, we must hint at other Particulars belonging to it, for the information of those, who are to prepare for it : And *First*, That it is administred by a Bishop only, *2dly*, That the manner in which he administers it, is by the Imposition of Hands, upon those, who are to be Confirm'd, and making the Sign of the Cross on their Foreheads with Bless'd Oyl, or Chrysm, saying these Words, *I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross, I confirm thee with the Chrysm of Salvation, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

There is no other Action mention'd in Scripture, besides the Imposition of Hands ; but it having been the Practice of the Primitive Church to Anoint with Chrysm, such as were to be Confirm'd, as is deliver'd both by Fathers and Councils, it cannot be question'd, but so it was order'd by Christ, and taught by the Apostles ; and thus

it is expressely declar'd by the Antient Bishop and Martyr S. *Fabian*, and by S. *Dionysius*, who liv'd in the time of the Apostles, and by others.

By this Chrysm is signified the Effects of Confirmation, as by Water is signified the Effect of Baptism; for as Water represents the Cleansing of the Soul, to the recovery of Innocence; so in the Chrysm, which is compounded of Oyl and Balm, the Oyl, which flows and spreads it self, expressees the Fulness of Grace which by the Hbly Ghost is pour'd forth from Christ the Head upon his Members; whence not only Christ, but likewise such his Members, as are distinguish'd by a Particular Effusion of Grace, are call'd, *The Anointed of our Lord*. The Balm or Balsam is of a Sweet Perfume, and a Great Perservative against Corruption; and in this is represented the Grace of Confirmation, which strengthens the Minds of the Faithful against the Contagion of Vice, and so prepares them for a Good Life, that abounding in Good Works, they may daily offer a sweet Oblation to our Lord, and say with the Apostle, *We are to God a sweet Saviour of Christ*, 2 Cor. 2. 15.

With this Chrysm is made the Sign of the Cross on the Forehead; and this signifies,

signifies, that the Person Confirm'd is Lifted a Soldier of Christ Crucified, and that he ought not to be asham'd of the Cross, nor of the Reproaches, Contempts and Persecutions belonging to it. He is likewise struck by the Bishop on the Check, to put him in Mind, that being now Confirm'd, he ought to be prepar'd to receive Blows, and with Courage, bear all kind of Persecution for Christ's sake. After this the Bishop gives him the Blessing of Peace, to remind him, that the Grace of the Holy Ghost is the Christian's Peace, and that he is to seek no Peace, but what is to be the Fruit of War, not in yielding to the Proposals of his Spiritual Enemies, but overcoming them.

This is the Manner of administering the Sacrament, and these the Effects of it : But then all those, who desire to partake of this Fulness of Grace, ought to remember, that their Souls ought to be duly prepar'd for it ; *First*, By a true Repentance, and an humble Confession of their Sins ; because where Innocence has been lost by Sin, nothing but Repentance can prepare such a Soul, for becoming the Temple of the Holy Ghost. 207, It must be advisable

visable to add Fasting, Alms, Prayer, and other Good Works, that so this Work, which can be done but once, may be done well, and such Effectual Grace be receiv'd, as may serve for Life, and be an Establishment under all the Weakness of it. The Church does not absolutely require, that this Sacrament should be receiv'd Fasting; but 'tis what she advises, as more conformable to the laudable Practice of the Primitive Christians.

All are capable of this Sacrament, who have been Baptized: But the proper time is not till after the use of reason; hence at Twelve Years Old is a convenient Age, and not before Seven; because, before this Age Children are not capable of Fighting the Battels of Christ, which is the proper Effect of this Sacrament. But however, if there be hazard of being afterwards disappointed, Infants at any Age, after Baptism, may commendably be admitted to it. A Godfather is here requir'd as in Baptism, that by his Instruction the Party Confirm'd may be inform'd of the best way of engaging with his Enemy, and being Victorious over him; and likewise, by his Charity be reprov'd, if he abandons the Interest of Christ,

Christ, and takes part with his Adversary. Whence such a Person is to be chose for Godfather, who seems qualified for discharging this Twofold Duty, which he undertakes, and is most likely to do it.

Hitherto as to those, who are not yet Confirm'd: But now let those, who have already receiv'd the Benefit of this Sacrament, consider, how far they manifest the Grace of it in their Lives, and satisfie the Obligations they then undertook: Weakness and Cowardice in Persons not Confirm'd, is nothing surprizing; but 'tis wholly disagreeable, and without excuse, in such as have been Confirm'd under the Hands of the Bishop. For do not they there undertake to be the Soldiers of Christ? Do not they there engage in his Cause, and, in effect, promise not to forsake it, upon any Motives of Fear or Shame, of Interest or Pleasure? Do not they there offer themselves to whatever Difficulties occur; and is it not their Profession, rather to embrace Death with all its Terrors, than prove Traitors to their God, or any ways be Faithless to him? This is the Profession, this the Christian Bravery of as many as are Confirm'd. And do

all

all live up to this Profession? O my God, how could I wish it were so! But, alas, is it not too evident, that not only the Severity of Persecution, but likewise a Compliance with the World, Respect to Company, the Apprehension of Reproach, a Word of Contempt, every ordinary Affliction makes these give way; and, too often, wholly quit their Post; so that those, whose Duty it is, rather to die, than offend against God, shrink under the least Inconveniencies; wait not for Tyrants to try their Courage, but fall before Trifles.

And how far am I of this Number? O God, I must acknowledge my Weaknesses to be General; I cannot but blush, when I think of so much Cowardice join'd with the Profession of a Soldier. Grant me now, I beseech thee, a better Spirit; grant I may have ever before my Eyes the Profession I have made, that such Meekness, and Patience, and Courage, may be daily found in me, as becomes one, who has been Confirm'd a Disciple of the Cross. Come, O Holy Ghost, and take a new Possession of my Heart; enter this Day into my Soul, and abide there for ever my Light, my Guide, and my Strength.

Monday

Monday in VWhitsun-VWeek.

HAVING implor'd this Day the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, according to our Necessities, and the Obligation of this Holy Time, there is still One Petition, which ought to be presented to Almighty God, belonging in a Particular Manner to this Festival. This Petition is one part of the Collect of the Holy Ghost, where the Church thus Prays; *Da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere: Grant, that by the same Spirit, we may relish the things, that are Good:* And this I earnestly recommend to all, because on the Grant of this Petition very much depends that excellent Disposition of Soul, which prepares us for satisfying the whole Law of God, and will in a great Measure facilitate our Salvation.

Those, who observe the Steps to all Sinful and Scandalous Disorders, cannot but see, that the very first is from that unhappy Inclination, which we have to Evil, by which the things, that are displeasing to God, are most grateful to us, and what he commands are the general Object of our Aversion. From
this

this Root springs all that is Sinful; whilst following the bent of our Corrupt Nature, we are forward in pleasing our selves to the displeasure of God, and thus quite forsake the Way of Salvation. And what is the Sum of this, but that we Relish the things, that are Evil, and not those, that are Good? Hence must we Date all the Sinful Misfortunes of the World. Churchmen or Religious Neglect the Duties of their State, and by the Irregularities of Idleness or Ambition, dishonour their Character, it is because they Relish not the proper Exercises of their Function; the Labor, the Retirement, the Reservedness, the Humility of their Profession, have no grateful Taste in them; and that alone, which pleases, is an Indulgence of Nature in Sloth, Sleep, and Ease, unprofitable Conversation, Entertainments, Idle Company, or the Applause of the World. If the Husband Neglects his Family, and exposes that to Ruin, which is his Duty to Preserve; is it not, because he has a dislike to Discipline and Business, and can find no Relish, but in Drinking, Gaming, Expensive Satisfactions, or Extravagance? If the Wife leaves her House to disorder, and becomes remarkable

Remarkable for her expensive or undisciplin'd Life, is it not because there is nothing grateful in the Obligations of her State, Moderation pleases not, and Care is her Aversion? Is it not, because there is something Sweet in what is Irregular, Vanity has its Charms, and the Entertainments of Idleness in all its Varieties, is what she admires? If Youth be Ungovernable and Extravagant, is it not because there is something mortifying in Order, Seriousness and Labor, and there is no Relish, but of what is Vain, Rash, or Disorderly? If Servants prove Idle or Faithless to their Trust, is it not because a Zealous Discharge of their Duty has no Savor in it; and 'tis more agreeable to comply with their own Slothful or Gossiping Humor? If Vice and Wickedness have disfigur'd a great part of the Christian World, and brought the Professors of the Gospel to the resemblance of Beasts; the occasion is, because there is not a Relish in Christian Souls of what is Good; nothing delights but what is Corrupt; and hence being invited by what Pleases, they are drawn by degrees into all that is Extravagant.

If this be a true Genealogy of Vice, then the Church has Reason to put this
Petition

Petition into the Mouths of the Faithful, *Da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere. Grant us in the same Spirit, to Relish the things that are Good.* That so from this better Disposition, the Effect of the Holy Ghost, they may find an agreeableness in the things, that God demands of them, and by this be led with Satisfaction thro' every Duty.

To Pray then, that we may *Recta sapere, Relish the things that are Good*; is to beseech God, that by the Virtue of the Holy Ghost, we may all find an inward bent in our Souls, inclining us, as with a kind of Weight, to the Obligations of our respective States; that our particular Duties may have something agreeable in them, such as may invite us sweetly, such as may raise in us a Desire of complying with them, and tolerate no Rest within us, till we have faithfully discharg'd what we know, is incumbent on us. It is to desire of God, that we may delight in our Duty, that this Delight may be accompanied with an Aversion to every thing, that becomes us not; that we be uneasie under the Delays and Hindrances of our Obligation; that Shame and Confusion follow us, as often as we are out of our Business, in whatever

whatever is disagreeable to our Station.

Oh, how Beautiful would thy Gates be, O Zion, how Pleasing would all thy Streets be, O Jerusalem, O Church of God, were all thy Inhabitants, all Faithful Souls, influenc'd by this Holy Spirit! What a Harmony would it be, delightful to God and the whole Court of Heaven, to see every living Member of the Church, busie in their proper Function, cheerfully performing their Duty, and taking Pleasure in the Ways of our Lord! O God, when wilt thou grant this Petition, that we may Relish the things, that are Good, and delight in those Ways, to which thou hast call'd us? When wilt thou unbend our Crooked Nature, and remove that Perverseness of our Wills, which inclines us to all that is Corrupt, and turns us from the Ways of thy Commandments? This it is we ask at thee this Day; this is the subject of our Petition. *Da nobis in eodem Spiritu Recte Sapere.* Thou hast sent forth thy Holy Spirit upon thy Church, grant now, that it may be plentifully pour'd forth upon us; that in the Virtue of the same Holy Spirit, we may Relish and Delight in the things that are Good.

E

And

And can then these Vessels of Corruption be thus transformed and become Vessels of Honor? Can we ever hope to see the Violence of our daily Passions succeeded by uniform Desires of Good? This cannot be a Work of Human Power; but of Grace it may be, which is able to force Nature against its own Streams. Hearken to the Royal Prophet; there was a time, when he felt the Weight of Corruption, so as to fall under it into the Displeasure of God; and yet this Power of Sin was overcome by a greater Power of Grace; the Affections of his Heart are purified, he desires not the Satisfaction of Nature, but he has a Thirst upon his Soul, a Thirst after God and his Law, *Concupivit Anima mea desiderare Justificationes tuas. Bonum mihi lex oris tui, super millia auri & argenti. Sitivit anima mea Dominum.* My Soul is earnest in the desire of thy Precepts, O Lord: The Law of thy Mouth is better to me, than Treasures of Silver or Gold: My Soul Thirsts after my God: In these and infinite other Expressions does this Prophet manifest the merciful Power of God upon him, in taking from his Heart the Taste of all perishing Goods, and giving him such a Relish of the

the Service of God and his Duty, that
now the most grateful Attractiones of
Earth had no Taste in them, in
Comparison of this. And does not S.
Paul express the same, who declares
himself Dead to this World, and
Sighs for his deliverance; who re-
presents the most valuable Goods of this
Life as Contemptible Dung, so he
may but gain Christ? The same we
find in many others; It is plain then,
that whatever our Corruption be, it is
subject to the Power of Grace, and that
by this our Hearts may be so changed,
as to lose the Sense of all Earthly
Charms, and find none, but what be-
long to Duty and Eternal Goods.

But if it may be, why is it not so
with us? Is not God willing to help
us into the Way of Salvation? Is not
his Holy Spirit ready to give us this
new Life? God is certainly willing, and
his Holy Spirit ready: But let us con-
sider; do such Inestimable Blessings re-
quire nothing on our part? Is one *Da-
nobis*; *Grant us*, enough to prepare
our Hearts an abode for the Holy Ghost?
Were this One Petition poured forth
from a Heart thirsting after a new Life,
it might prevail with God, who regards
the Sincerity, and not the Length of

Prayers: But how can we expect a New Spirit to come and take Possession of our Hearts, who are not willing to quit the Old one? Whilst our whole delight is in such Ways, as our Corruption suggests; such as are either directly Sinful, or leading to Sin, by being Injurious to the Obligations of our State; whilst our delight is here, whilst this is daily encourag'd, and we as industriously promote it, as if not a present Satisfaction, but Heaven depend- ed on it; what can a Cold *Da nobis* do, for preparing the Heart for God? S. Gregory informs us of the little Hopes we have: *Nemo receptaculum Spiritus Sancti efficiat, nisi Spiritu suo primisus evacuetur.* None can receive the Holy Spirit of God, who has not first cast forth his own Spirit. Christians, if this be so, then see, what you have to do, while you ask for the Holy Ghost; see and take pains in it; for 'tis in vain to ask, that by the Spirit of God we may Relish the things, that are Good, if we do not observe all the undue Satisfaction of our own Corrupt Spirit, and so steddily strive against them, as to put our proper Will into the Subjection of Grace. Such must be our Endeavors, and by such alone, can we expect success in the
Petition

Petition of this Day. Grant therefore O God of Mercy, we may in earnest pursue this Work, that having disengag'd our selves from the Violence of our own Evil Spirit, we may be possess'd by thine, and by Virtue of the same Spirit ReHh the things that are Good.

Tuesday in Whitsun Week.

ON this Festival of the Holy Ghost, in whose Descent was the accomplishment of the New Law, every Christian ought to seek his Establishment in it; for this must be the Effect of the Holy Ghost, as well in us, as it was in the Apostles. By the Power of God the Father we were Created, by the Mercy of God the Son we have been Redeem'd, and by the Virtue of the Holy Ghost is to be compleated in us whatever Mercies we have receiv'd, by a more perfect Sanctification. This is to be the Effect of that Grace, which from him, as from the Treasure of Infinite Goodness, is to be pour'd forth into our Hearts, and this Grace being manifold, according to the Multiplicity of our Wants, we cannot have a more pro-

per Subject of our Consideration this Day, than to see, what these Graces are, commonly known by the *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, that from hence we may know the Remedies of our Necessities, and from whom to ask them.

One Infirmary we have in Misplacing our Fear, both in being too Apprehensive of the Evils of this Life, and letting the Fear of God run into Despair or Dejection; so that the Soul being miserably Rack'd and Spent with this Passion, it is not capable of performing any one Duty to God with Life or Attention. This manifold Evil has no Remedy, but in that better Fear, which is the Gift of the Holy Ghost; by which the Soul regards God so Aweful in Majesty, so Adorable in his Mercy and Love, that tho' she be averse to the Evils of this Life, yet that, which above all the fears, is the Displeasure of God; and yet this Fear is so temper'd, that it destroys not the Quiet of Love, but is the Effect of it, and therefore with Steadiness passes by the Terrors of Imagination, as the Vanity of Dreams, and only these Starts, when it discovers the real Breach of God's Law before it. This Holy Fear is the Remedy of so many Evils, the

the Effects of that Fear, which is nothing but Passion and Weakness in us, that all have Reason to Pray for it, that so the Fear of this World may be deliver'd from all Excess, and the Fear of God from Indiscretion.

A Second Infirmary we have, in being too Solicitous for what belongs to this World, and too Indifferent in whatever is for our Eternal Interest; so that, while we seek the World, we have an Eagerness upon us, which excludes all other Thoughts: But when we seek Heaven, we are Cold and Tepid, and the little Concern we have for it, makes us easie in omitting or interrupting it, and opens our Hearts to whatever other Thoughts occur. Piety is the Remedy of this Evil, which inspiring us with Devotion and Zeal, makes us Earnest in all the Concerns of Eternity, Fervent in Prayer, Forward in Encouraging what is for God's Honor, and Solicitous for Reforming whatever is Dishonorable to him, and Unbecoming the Christian Profession. And this Piety being the Gift of the Holy Ghost, let our own and others Corruption inform us, whether we have not Reason to Pray for it.

A Third Infirmary we have in the

eager pursuit of our own Will, and letting this Eagerness, propt by Custom, Education or Interest, hinder us from discerning the Will of God: Thus we are too often Blind, as to that, which ought to be our Rule, and take that for our Guide, which certainly leads us out of the Way. The Remedy of this, is that Knowledge, which being the Gift of the Holy Ghost, is alone capable of discovering to us the Will of God, and giving us such a Strength of Understanding, as to discern our Duty thro' all that Darkness, which is before us; and let the Number of our Willful or Affected Mistakes now tell us, whether we have Reason at this time to ask this Knowledge of God.

A Fourth Infirmary we have, in being so easily diverted from what we know to be the Will of God, and discourag'd from the Execution of it, by Self-love, the Love of the World, the Love of Interest, of Pleasure, of Company, of Friends, of Children; so that there is scarce any one Day or Hour of our Lives, wherein some Immoderate Love of Creatures, or Fear, or Shame, does not defeat in us the strongest Resolutions we have of doing the Will of God. This Weakness is the immediate
Occasion

Occasion of all our Sins and Fortitudes, which is the Gift of the Holy Ghost, being the only Remedy, by which we come to greater Strength and Firmness of Mind, so as to stand against all Temptations, let our daily Weakness inform us, whether we have not Reason to ask this Fortitude of God.

A Fifth Infirmary we have, in being subject to the Snares of the Devil, so that, tho' we have a Detestation of him, when he comes with the Proposal of barefac'd Wickedness; yet we are easily deceiv'd, when he puts on a Disguise, and, under the Cover of Innocence or Religion, invites us to follow him. By this Artifice, how often are we drawn into the most Criminal Passions, how often surpriz'd in Sin? How often do we see Schism and Rebellion justified, and the Violation of all the Commandments maintain'd, without any Offence of Conscience. The Remedy against this Weakness, is *Counsel*, another Gift of the Holy Ghost, by which, as by the helps of an interior Light, are discover'd to us the Snares of the Devil, and we are ever inform'd of the Dangers, that are before us. This is so necessary a Help amidst the infinite Delusions, to which we are expos'd

amidst the strong Inclinations of a Corrupt Nature, which finding favor from Blindness, make us willing to be deceived; that, I think, none can be Sincere in the desire of Salvation, who do not heartily Petition the Holy Ghost to be their Counsel, by whose Advice these infinite Deceits may be discover'd, and their Ruin be prevented by such a Discovery.

A Sixth Infirmary we have in the Weakness of our Reason, which being Wounded by Sin, cannot comprehend those Divine Truths, which God proposes to be believ'd, and yet has that Pride join'd with its Weakness, as to think it self capable of understanding all. Whence it too often undertakes to Examine and Pronounce of such Mysteries, as are quite above its reach, and has this Punishment of its Presumption, to adore its own Phantoms, which are Shadows and Dreams, for the increased Truths of God. The Remedy of this Evil, is in that Gift of the Holy Ghost, call'd *Understanding*, by which we have such a true Sense of God, as to know, that He and his Truths, are not the discovery of Curiosity or Disputes, but to be Reveal'd by him, and to be Receiv'd, as they have been deliver'd, without setting

up any Court within our selves, to Enquire and make Judgment of them. Where Reason is not thus humbled and convinc'd, it must necessarily be surpriz'd in variety of Errors; and then let those, who can but comprehend the Pride of such Errors, and the Danger of being Obstinate against the Truths of God, consider, whether there be not Reason to ask this Understanding of him.

A Seventh Infirmary we have, in neglecting the daily Opportunities of Salvation, and there seeking some private Interest, or the Satisfaction of pleasing our selves, where, with good Management, we might have made a Sacrifice to God, and laid up Treasures in Heaven. This is a General Indiscretion, both in the Ill use of Time and Money, and in whatever we have to do or suffer, still forgetting Eternity, and seldom looking beyond our selves. The Remedy of this, is that *Wisdom*, which is the Gift of the Holy Ghost, by which we are taught to make the best of every thing, seeking God in all things, and ordering all our Life to the Glory of God, and the Purchase of Eternal Happiness. This is so much every one's Interest, that there is no need of putting any in mind of the Reason

Reason they have to ask this Wisdom of God. Here we have a short view of our Necessities, and their Remedies. Do thou O God grant all thy Faithful a due Sense of both, that in this Time of Mercy they may find the good Effects of it in their Souls, and by these Gifts of thy Holy Spirit be establish'd against the Assaults of all Evil Spirits, and make the Gospel, which they profess, the Rule of their Lives.

Trinity Sunday.

ON this Festival, Sacred to the Blessed Trinity, and at this time, when the Presumption of Weakness attempts to bring this Incomprehensible Mystery to the level of Imagination, we cannot do better, than Recall what Orthodox Faith teaches, and Oppose against this Rashness the Doctrine of the Church as deliver'd in St. Athanasius's Creed. In this, then, we are taught, that the Catholic Faith is this; that we worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity: Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the

the Substance. For there is One Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Divinity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is One; the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreated, the Son Uncreated, the Holy Ghost Uncreated. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, the Holy Ghost Eternal: And yet they are not Three Eternals, but One Eternal. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, the Holy Ghost Almighty: And yet not Three Almighties, but One Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God: And yet they are not Three Gods, but One God. So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Ghost is Lord: And yet not Three Lords, but One Lord. For as we are compell'd by the Christian Truth to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; so are we forbid by the Catholic Religion to say, There are Three Gods, or Three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but

but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son; not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. There is therefore One Father, not Three Fathers: One Son, not Three Sons: One Holy Ghost, not Three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity nothing is before or after other; none greater or less than other. But all the Three Persons are Co-eternal and Co-equal. So that in all things, as has been said above, both Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipp'd.

By this Profession is to be regulated the Faith of this Mystery; it was compos'd in the first Ages of the Christian Church, when *Arius*, with his Numerous and Powerful Followers, had with equal Heat and Impiety oppos'd this Article of the Catholic Faith, as it had been taught by the Apostles, and deliver'd down by the Pastors of the Church, who, to satisfie the Charge given them by Christ and his Holy Spirit, *Of taking Care of the Flock*, assembled in the First General Council of Nice, and there publish'd the Faith of this Mystery, as it had been receiv'd, and setting a Mark upon *28. 12*, as a *Witness*, that design'd to devour the Flock,

Trinity Sunday. III

Flock, prevented the growth of his Impiety at that time, and by pronouncing *Anathema* against him, left a Rule, by which all succeeding Ages might be secur'd against his detestable Errors. In conformity to the Declaration of the *Nicene* Fathers was this Profession made, and has been ever since us'd by the Catholic Church, as the Standard, by which the Orthodox Christians, as to this Point, have been distinguish'd from the Abettors of Heresie.

As the Faith of this Mystery has been deliver'd, so it is to be receiv'd by all. Human Reason is not to usurp here any Authority of Enquiring or Judging, how far it is conformable to the Principles of Reason, much less of excepting against it, upon any pretended Evidence of being Contrary to to such Principles. In Mysteries of Faith Reason has no more to do, than to enquire into the Authority, that delivers them, and upon finding this to be Legitimate; that is, to be the Authority ordain'd by God, and by him qualified for this end, it is oblig'd to submit, and all search, after this, into the Reasonableness of them, is seldom better than the Effect of unprofitable Curiosity, and too often of Impiety.

They,

They, who understand not this, know not what Faith is, which is not an Assent to Truths, because we understand them; but because they are propos'd to us by an Authority, which exacts our Credit. And tho' this may seem a Reflection upon Reason, thus to receive Truths of which it comprehends nothing; yet this again can be only with those, who understand not what Reason is: For certainly, it is as much an Act of Reason to *Submit*, when there is Reason for it, as it is to conclude with Certainty, when there is an Evidence from Natural Principles. Does not he act rationally, who, going to Sea, submits to the Judgment of a Skillful Pilot? Is not the Soldier Rational, when he submits to the Orders of his General? And does not he, that is to learn any Secret of Art or Science, act according to the Principles of the best Reason, when he submits to the Direction of his Master? And this, tho' the Case should be so, will not easily happen, that in the Pilot's Course, or the General's Orders, or in the Master's Direction, there should appear nothing Rational; that is, no Connection with the End propos'd; but rather, in all present appearance, contrary to it; yet

yet still is the Submission most Rational, because of the great Confidence they have in the Fidelity and Skill of such Persons; whose Orders they can even then believe to be Rational, when in Particular they cannot see so far into them, as to make such a Judgment of them.

Now, if Submission to Fellow-creatures be most Rational, when we are to be directed by them in any Mystery, of which we are at present Ignorant; it cannot certainly be a Reflection upon Reason, to submit to God; but it must be most Unreasonable, not to submit to him; for tho' we comprehend not what he reaches, and have no insight into the Particulars, which he proposes; this is no more, than we often meet, when we are taught by Men, and even things, that are Human, and yet we submit. And, as for the Truths belonging to God, Reason cannot be surpriz'd, in not being able to see into them; for as it knows God to be infinitely above whatever is created, so it must expect his Truths to be so; and whilst it sees itself daily worsted, even in the most imperfect Creatures, there being something so Admirable in their Composition and Nature, that the

the best Philosopher is only a Gueſſer at them; where can be the Grounds for Surprize, if the Truths belonging to God, are found to be, what they are call'd, Myſteries to it?

The Truths therefore of God being Myſteries to Human Reaſon, they are not to be learnt, but from himſelf or thoſe, who are by him Deputed to teach them; and he being the Unerring Truth, he not only deſerves to be Believ'd, but exacts it from us, ſo that we cannot belong to him, if we do not Believe him; ſince by not Believing, we diſown in him the Eſſential Attribute of Truth, which is to deny him to be God. To ſubmit therefore to him, in receiving his Truths, both from thoſe, whom he has Ordain'd and Qualified to teach them, and in the Manner, in which they are taught, is ſo far from being a Reflection upon Reaſon, that 'tis the Firſt Principle of Reaſon thus to ſubmit to him, and to receive his Truths with a greater Assurance of certainty, even without ſeeing them, than whereever others we have from the ſuppos'd Evidence of our own Knowledge; becauſe the Assurance of God's Truth is much greater than of Human Science.

This

This is the Description of Faith, we have from Scripture, which is to *Cast down Imaginations or Reasonings, and every high thing, that exalts it self against the Knowledge of God, and brings into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ,* 2 Cor. 10. 5. It is the Character of it, which we have receiv'd from the Primitive Fathers against those, who were too Wise in their own Conceits: *Quid est Fides, says S. Augustin, nisi credere, quod non vides?* What is Faith, but to believe what thou seest not? *Quid intelligimus aliquid, Rationi debemus; quod autem Credimus, Autoritati.* 'Tis from Reason, that we understand any thing; but from Authority, that we believe. *De util. cred.* And S. Hilarius in his Books of the Trinity against the *Arians*; *Habet non tam veniam, quam premium, ignorare quod credas.* 'Tis not only Pardonable, but Meritorious, to believe what thou dost not understand.

And now since Divine Mysteries are not proportion'd to Human Reason, but, that the Faith of them may be Pure and Orthodox, must be receiv'd from Authority, and so be believ'd, as deliver'd, tho' without seeing or knowing them; let it be here consider'd, whether their Method be right, who
upon

upon the Proposal of Divine Mysteries: by Authority, or Reading them upon Sacred Record, make their own Reason the Measure of their Truth, and according, as they find them to suit or disagree with their Reason, so far, and in that Sense, judge them to be Believ'd, as they are propos'd, or to be understood in a Figurative Sense, and therefore as they stand in Terms, to be no Matters of Faith: Let this, I say, be consider'd; for if the Mysteries, which God requires us to believe, are so far above our Reason, that we are not able either to see, know, or understand them, can it be the Way to Truth, to believe them no farther than we can understand them; to see first, how far they seem Rational to us, and then so far to believe them? This would be a good Way, were our Reason a good Measure of Divine Truths; but if it be not, then it is certainly taking Pains to go out of the Way, and for corrupting the Truth. Is not a wrong and crooked Measure, the Way to make ill Work, since the nearer it comes to it, the worse it is? If one should take an Oyster-shell for his Mould, wherein to Cast the Figure of a Man, or a Reed, whereby

whereby to Shape a Ship of Clay; is it not plain, that framing the Clay to such ill-chosen Moulds, would never bring it to what is intended, and the stricter Exactness would be no help to the Work? And what better Work will that Christian make, who labors to Shape Divine Mysteries by his own Reason, since this being not proportion'd to them, the pains in bringing them to it, must be to make them unlike what they are; and then how can the Faith, suited to such Ideas, be according to Truth?

Hence, I think, the Christian ought to be afraid of letting his Curiosity or Reason tamper with Divine Mysteries, since he cannot but see, this is meddling with what he does not understand, and presuming to decide what he is no ways capable of judging. Christian Faith must be a Faith of Divine Mysteries according to Truth; and he only, that has Humility of Judgment, to receive and believe them, as they are deliver'd by the Authority establish'd by Christ for this end, can have a True Faith, and believe according to Truth. And as for all those, who, distrusting this Authority, resolve to depend on their own Judgments, and to believe no otherwise of Divine Mysteries,

series, than as they can Model them by their own Reason, is it not an evident Consequence, that there is Presumption in such an Undertaking, and that their Faith must be as far from Truth, as their Reason is from being proportion'd to such Mysteries?

Wherefore, Christian, if thou hast Reason, and this tells thee, that the Mysteries of Faith are above thy Reason, do not in the first Act of thy Christianity, proceed so unreasonably, as to subject such Mysteries to the Examination and Decision of Reason, which, thou confessest, is not capable of making a true Judgment of them. Rather use thy Reason, in seeking the Authority, which God has establish'd, for teaching thee his Truths; and then hear with Humility and Believe; such Faith being built on the Commands and Promises of God, will captivate Reason, and not be subject to its Mistakes, and having Eternal Truth for its Foundation, cannot fall of Truth in what it believes. This in the Way, O Blessed Redeemer, thy Goodness has ordain'd, for delivering us from the Rashness of our own Judgments; may we, with Thanksgiving, embrace this Mercy, and thus believe, as thou has commanded, without giving Reason the Liber-

ty of transgressing her Bounds, and Sac-
crilegiously breaking into thy Truths.

Corpus Christi-Day.

WE cannot let this Solemnity pass, without speaking something of the Mystery, which is the Subject of it; not that I can pretend to clear it to Reason, for I know, all the Mysteries of the Gospel are above it, and that, as S. Gregory says, *Divina Operatio, si Ratione comprehenditur, non est admirabilis*: There would be nothing wonderful in the Works of the Divine Power, if Reason comprehended them; but that by considering the undoubted Effects of this Power, we may Reason something upon those Arguments, which pretend to set this Mystery beyond the Bounds of Possibility, and by other suppos'd Absurdities, endeavor to Invalidate the Truth of it. The Church therefore teaching, that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is really present the True Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and this by the Conversion or Change of the Bread and Wine into his Body and Blood, which Change is call'd by the Church Transubstantiation.

First,

First, It may be consider'd, whether there be Grounds for supposing this Power in God, for effecting this Change of the Bread and Wine into his Body and Blood. And here, as to the Subject of God's Power, the Scripture informing us, *First*, That he turn'd the Rivers of *Egypt* into Blood, *Exod.* 7. 20. the Dust into Lice, *Exod.* 8. 17. Lot's Wife into a Pillar of Salt, *Gen.* 19. 26. Water into Wine, at the Marriage of *Cana*, *Jo.* 2. 9. 2dly, That the Devil own'd this Power in Christ, *Mat.* 4. 3: when he said to him, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these Stones be made Bread.* 3dly, That God had Power to make all things out of nothing: There seems a Necessity of confessing that God has the Power of changing one thing into another, as he pleases; and therefore, that Christ, by his Word, by which all things were made, could change the Bread and Wine into his Body and Blood. And while we see it the Work of Nature every Day, it change Bread and Drink into the Substance of our Body and Blood; not changing it into a New Body, but into the very same, that had a Being before; so much as this cannot in reason be denied, but that the God of Nature may do as much by his Word, as Nature by its gradual

gradual Operation; and therefore that the Power may be allow'd in Christ, of changing the Bread and Wine into his own Body and Blood, tho' they had before a Being.

zally, It may be consider'd, whether it be possible for the Body of Christ to be contain'd Whole and Entire under the compass of a piece of Bread or Wafer. In this Matter, there might be reason to urge the Impossibility, if we speak of the Body of Christ, in that *Gross and Corporeal manner of Being*, in which it was upon Earth, and in which Some some of the Disciples seem'd to understand it, when they cry'd out, *Jo. 6. 60. This is a hard saying, who can hear it?* But if there be another manner of Being more *Perfect and Spiritual*, such as brings a Body to the resemblance of a *Spirit*, then there can be no more difficulty in apprehending a Body thus Spiritualiz'd, to be contain'd Whole and Entire under the compass of a piece of Bread, than for a Spirit to be present there.

Now, that there is such a Spiritual manner of Being, of which a Human Body is capable by the Divine Power, we may learn from *S. Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 53.* where speaking of the Resurrecti-

on, he says, *This Corruptible Body must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal Body must put on Immortality.* And, v. 44. *It is sown a Natural Body, it is rais'd a Spiritual Body. There is a Natural Body, and there is a Spiritual Body.* If then there is a Body, and yet Incorruptible, Immortal and Spiritual, and thus all the Bodies of the Just shall be after the Resurrection; let but the Body of Christ be conceiv'd thus Spiritual: and then, as a Spirit requires no Extension or Greatness of Place for its Being, so neither will the Body of Christ. And this is not to suppose the Body of Christ to be a Body and no Body; but to confess with *S. Paul*, that a Body, according to its different States; has different manners of Being belonging to it; that in its Natural State, it has the Being of Nature, and in its Supernatural or Spiritual State, the Being of a Spirit: And yet the same Body in Substance still; as 'tis certain, the same Bodies of the Just, which were Natural, will be Glorified, and become Spiritual; the same as to Substance, and different only in the manner of their Being. In this Sense may be understood those Words of Christ, *Jo. 6. 63. It is the Spirit, that quickeneth, the Flesh profiteth nothing*

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thing: The Words that I speak to you, are Spirit and Life: That is, the Flesh profits nothing, as in that Carnal, Corporal manner, in which it is at present; but as it is quicken'd by the Spirit, by which it will become Spiritual, so it will profit the Receiver: The Words, I speak to you, are to be understood, as giving Spirit and Life, as rendering my Body Spiritual, and giving Life and Spirit to him, that Receives it.

By keeping close to this Thought, several other Difficulties may be solv'd, relating to this Subject. For Christ's Body being in the Sacrament, according to this Perfect manner of Being, even like a Spirit, it may be apprehended, how the Sacrament may be broken, without injuring or breaking his Body: As when a Man's Body is broken, or a Limb cut off, the Soul remains still entire; because it is a Spirit, and not subject to such Accidents, as these. Thus likewise may it be receiv'd, how the Body of Christ may be Whole and Entire in every part of the Sacrament, after the Sacred Host is divided; as also, how it may be in many Places at once: For though we cannot easily understand this possible to a Body extended, and in its Corporeal

manner of Being; there's no such difficulty in relation to a Spirit, or other thing, in its manner of being like a Spirit, because a Spirit has no dependance on Place, nor is confin'd either to it, or by it.

But Christ, at the time of the Consecration, having an Extended Body, and not thus Spiritualized, if his same Body was really in the Sacrament, it must be there in the same Corporeal manner, as he then was sitting at Table; and this overthrows the whole System. This need not be suppos'd, and it cannot be prov'd; because there is no necessary Connection between Christ's Body and the manner of its Being; and therefore tho' Christ's Body at the Table was Extended, yet the same Body in reality and substance might be present in the Sacramental Species, and not in the same manner of Extension. For tho' he said, This is my Body, he did not say, My Body is here in the same manner, as at the Table. That Corporeal manner of Being, was wholly subject to his Divine Power; so that by this Power, he could either divest himself of it, or continue it, as by a Natural Power he could the Cloathes, he then wore. And so he did in Fact, as

the Holy Fathers declare, when he was Born without injury to his Mother's Virginal Integrity: As therefore, for verifying those Words, This is my Body, there was no necessity of his Body being present in the Sacrament, with the same Habit, which he wore at the Table; so neither with the same Corporeal Extension, which by his Divine Power was equally separable from him, as his Cloaths.

3dly, We may consider, whether it be possible for the Body and Blood of Christ to be really Present under the Sacramental Species of Bread and Wine, since after Consecration, our Senses, our Eyes and Taste tell us, the Eucharist is still Bread and Wine. The Possibility of this seems evident from other Instances of Fact; as of the Holy Ghost, which at Christ's Baptism, descended in a bodily Shape like a Dove, upon him, Luk. 3. 22. And in the Angel which Mary Magdalen saw at the Sepulchre, as a Young Man cloth'd in a Long White Robe, Mar. 16. 5. Here 'tis plain, that an Angel in one Case, and the Divine Substance of the Holy Ghost in the other, were really Present under the Species or Appearances of Created things; and that, while the Senses gave

Information of those Objects, presented, being a Dove and a Young Man, there was no more, than the Appearances of such Objects, and the Holy Ghost, and an Angel, were really present under them. Now if an Angel may be Substantially present, under the Species of a Young Man, and the Holy Ghost, under the Species of a Dove, must it not be concluded Possible to the Divine Power, that Christ may be really present under the Species of Bread and Wine?

But are not the Senses then deceiv'd? If they are, or are not, it is no more in this last Case of the Eucharist, than in the former; and those being Matters of Fact, let the Philosopher reconcile them with the Senses, as he sees Reason, the Faith of a Christian needs not be concern'd in that. But however, to be Advocate once for the Senses; it may be easily granted, that the Senses are not deceiv'd; for in all these Cases the Eyes make a true Report of the Color and Form, that appear in the Objects before them; the Ears of the Sound; the Palat of the Taste; here is no Mistake.

Where then is the Mistake? It may easily be in the Judgment, which, if

it concludes too hastily, or from the the Information of that Sense, which is not sufficient Evidence in the Case, may easily be overseen; and a thing so very common can be no matter of Surprise, whilst every Day brings fresh Instances of our making wrong Judgments of the things, we See, Hear, and Taste. All the Eyes we have are not sufficient for making a True Judgment of Ten Thousand Compounds of Art, nor our Taste, in many things of Eating and Drinking, especially, where Art has been concern'd in them. In these and infinit other Cases we may judge wrong of what we See, Taste and Feel; because these Senses are not sufficient, in many Cases, to direct our Judgment, and it will be Rash if we pronounce upon their Information. And yet let the Sense, which is Proper, make its Report, and a Right Judgment may hence be fram'd; let but the Ears give an account of what the Knowing and Candid Artificer says, and this will secure the Judgment from all Mistakes. If it be thus in many things purely Natural, and much more in things of Art; that we cannot judge aright of them, but what is heard from the Artist; this may be very well expected

and allow'd in things, that are the Subject of a Supernatural and Miraculous Power; so that while the Eyes inform what they See, the Palat what it Tastes, &c. yet the Judgment cannot be excus'd from Rashness; if it, upon these, forthwith pronounces, and does not wait and attend to what is Heard from him, who is the Author of such a Miraculous Work. — As therefore in the Holy Ghost descending, the Eyes of the Beholders giving an exact account of the Color, Form and Manner of it, they could by this Judge, what it resembled, but could not truly judge what it really was, till they had been inform'd from God, because it was the Effect of his Extraordinary Power; so in the Eucharist, being the Subject of like wonderful Power, after the Report of the Eyes and Taste, it is God must tell, what it really is, and from Hearing his Information is to be fram'd a True Judgment of it, and from this Judgment a True Faith, and so *S. Paul* says, that Faith comes by Hearing.

Thus, O God, do we Reason upon thy Mysteries, while, we confess, we cannot truly comprehend them. But, without comprehending, we know our Faith to be Right, while we Captivate

our

our Reason to what thou teachest. It is the Effect of thy Infinite Goodness, that thou art pleas'd to teach us; and it must be the Effect of infinite Blindness and Perverseness in us to confide more in our own Reasoning, than in Thee. Deliver me, O God, from this Blindness, and may my Reason be ever subject to Thee.

Sunday *within the* Octave of
Corpus-Christi.

THE Festival of the B. Eucharist being still continued, we cannot do better than go on at present with the Subject of this Solemnity, and consider other Difficulties, that occur in it, besides those, which have been already propos'd.

And *First*, Whether the Eucharist being call'd *Bread* in Scripture, even after Consecration, be sufficient Argument for believing, that it is nothing but Bread, and not the Body of Christ. We must confess, this would be a sufficient Motive for so believing, had we Assurance either from God, or Experience, that there are no Words in Scripture, but what are to be understood in their *Literal* or *Proper* Signification; but

since the Contrary is so evident, as to be acknowledg'd by all that read, it must be likewise acknowledg'd, that tho' this may be taken up as an Objection, yet there is no Proof or Evidence in it. 'Tis needless to multiply Instances; let these Two be enough; that *Aaron's* Serpent is call'd a *Rod*, *Exod. 7. 12.* because it had been chang'd from a Rod into a Serpent: And the Angel at the Sepulchre is call'd a *Young Man*, *Mar. 16. 5.* because in outward Appearance he resembl'd a Young Man. Thus may the Sacrament of Christ's Body be call'd *Bread*, because the Conversion is from Bread, and it is Bread in Appearance; but is no more a Proof of its being *Bread*, than that the Serpent was then a Rod, or the Angel a Young Man, because they are so call'd in Scripture.

The like return must be made to those, who bring several Instances of Holy Writ, where this Word *Is* can import no more, than *signifies*, and therefore, that when Christ says, this is my Body, the meaning of it can be no more, than this *signifies* my Body; for there can be no Proof in this, except the Rule were General; that, in Holy Scripture, whatever is express'd

by this Word *is*, must be understood for no more than *signifies*. For if this be not so, as certainly it is not, but that the Word is sometimes taken one way, and sometimes another, what Weight can there be in this Objection, for invalidating a Doctrine receiv'd, or breaking the Peace of a Church? And what more Weight is there, in shewing, that some Words in the Form of Consecration, are to be understood *figuratively*; as the Cas mention'd for the Wine? If it were first prov'd, that in whatever Sentence there is any one word us'd *Figuratively*, there, of course, the whole Sentence must be so taken, then it would prove something; but since this Supposition or Inference must necessarily confound all Scripture, therefore it cannot pass here, as sufficient for the regulating of Faith.

2dly, We may consider, whether Christ saying, *Do this in Remembrance of me*, be a Proof, that the Sacrament is only a Figure. But this it cannot be, since Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament, is a more lively Remembrance of Christ Dying on the Cross, than any Bread can be: As the Blood of a Martyr preserv'd, is the best Remembrance of his Martyrdom: And *Manna* kept

kept in the Ark, the best Memorial of the *Manna* coming from Heaven for the Food of the *Israelites*.

3^dly, Whether the Indignity, that may be offer'd to Christ, in Supposition of this Doctrine, as in being Eaten by Rats or Mice, be a sufficient Exception against the Truth of it. But if it were, would it not likewise be an Exception against his Passion; when his Blood being Shed at the Pillar and Cross, it was subject not only to the Possibility of the same Indignity, but to a much greater in Fact, in being trampled on by the Vilest of Men, Ministers of the Devil? And much greater was that, when receiv'd by *Judas*, at the last Supper, into a Treacherous Breast, and by as many ever since, as have unworthily approach'd to him. But these are the incomprehensible Condescendencies of his Mercy, which ought to excite our Love, rather than our Scandal; and if this should be a Motive of not Believing, 'tis only in those, where the Excess of his Goodness is above their Faith, as to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, to whom Christ's Humility was Scandal and Folly.

Well, but in all this there is still no Proof of this Doctrine. 'Tis true, for

we have hitherto only look'd into some Usual Exceptions made against it. But if the account of these be Rational, so as to clear this one Point, that they are not Evident Proof against the Doctrine of the Real Presence, sufficient with Reasonable and Unbias'd Men to overthrow it; then, believe me, it goes a great way towards the proving it. For the Doctrine of the Church must stand as Good, till there be Clear and Certain Proof of the Contrary; and without such Proof, it cannot be justified, according to Conscience, or the Rule of any Court of Judicature, to break the Peace of the Church, and depart from its Doctrine. And this is what we have at present more particularly to consider, whether the Objections against the Real Presence are so much more Certain and Clear than the Proofs for it, as to oblige, either in Conscience, or any Law, unbias'd Persons to depart from the Communion of that Church, which teaches it.

First, Then as to Scripture; the Grounds there for believing the Real Presence are, *First*, The Words of Christ at the Institution; *This is my Body, which is given for you; This is my Blood,* repeated by Three Evangelists in the same Express Terms, and again by S. Paul,

1 Cor. xi. 24. who adds, He who Eats and Drinks unworthily, Eats and Drinks Damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body, v. 29. and v. 27. shall be Guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. 2dly, The Words of Christ in S. John, c. 6. 51. I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven: If any Man Eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever: And the Bread, that I will give, is my Flesh, which I will give for the Life of the World. The Jews therefore strove amongst themselves, saying; how can this Man give us his Flesh to Eat? Then Jesus said to them; verily, verily I say to you; except you Eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and Drink his Blood, you shall have no Life in you. Whoever Eats my Flesh, and Drinks my Blood, has Eternal Life, and I will raise him up at the last Day. For my Flesh is Meat indeed, and my Blood is Drink indeed. He that Eats my Flesh, and Drinks my Blood, dwells in me, and I in him. His Disciples murmuring and replying, This is a hard saying, who can hear it? He remov'd not the Offence they took at his Words, by declaring, he spoke only of Bread, to be receiv'd as a Figure of his Body; but first proposing a Motive for raising their Faith; What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up, where he was before? By the Faith of his Miraculous

Ascension,

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Ascension, preparing for the Faith of the Mystery, he had propos'd, and of which they doubted. 2dly, Reprov'd some of them, upon this account, for want of Faith. 3dly, Permitted many of them to fall away, and walk no more with him; which we may presume, he would not have done, had there been no more Faith requir'd, than of Bread to be given in Remembrance of him. Lastly, Put this Test to his Apostles; whether they Believ'd the Truth of what he had said? And receiv'd this Answer, of their Faith in his Divinity, Power and Truth: *Lord, thou hast the Words of Eternal Life: We believe and are sure, that thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God.* Is there not in the whole Series of this Passage, something shewing, That what Christ here spoke of, was a Point hard to be Believ'd; that Great Faith was necessary for the Belief of it, even S. Peter's Faith, of Christ being the Son of God, and having the Words of Life; and that for want of this Faith, many forsook Christ? And could all this have been, had there been no more propos'd, than of Bread to be Eaten in Memory of Christ? The Jews, and those, who had been bred so, had been too much us'd

us'd to Types and Figures, to make a difficulty in Understanding or Believing what was to be no more than a Figure.

Now is there any Evidence can be produced from Scripture, which so positively confronts this, as to prove Certainly and Clearly, that all this is to be understood Figuratively, and that the Sacrament is no more than Bread, in Remembrance of Christ?

2dly, As to the Primitive Fathers, there are so many Texts in them, not only favoring but abetting this Doctrine, that they are in general condemn'd by those, who undertook first to reform; besides, Melancton in particular gives this his Judgment of them; *Nothing*, says he, *has more troubled my mind, than that of the Eucharist. And not only myself have weigh'd, what might be said on either side; but I have also sought out the Judgment of Old Writers touching the same: And when I have laid all together, I find no good Reason, that may satisfy a Conscience departing from the Propriety of Christ's Words, This is my Body. But let the Famous Modern Hugo Grotius stand for all, who in his Judgment upon sundry Points Controverted, thus says; I read the chief Writers of Old times: The Writers of the*

Three

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Three best Ages I read all and often. To these Writings applying the Rule of Vincen-
tius Lirinensis, approv'd by the most
learned Men, I collected, what by the Testi-
mony of the Ancients, and Impressions re-
maining to this Day, was deliver'd al-
ways, and everywhere, and constantly.
I saw the same remaining in that Church,
which is join'd with the Roman. In these
Words does this great Man, free from
Passion, and Indifferent to all Parties,
while his whole Business is to find the
Truth, declare his Sentiments of the
Ancient Fathers, and that the Do-
ctrines, of which they are Witnesses,
are those which now remain in the
Communion of the Roman Church.
Now, tho' it cannot be pretended, but
that some Expressions of these Fathers
minister Matter for Objections against
this and other Doctrines; yet the Con-
fession of these Two Eminent Men,
besides many others, gives sufficient
Grounds to believe, that from such
Objections it cannot be Clearly and
Certainly prov'd, that the Fathers did
not teach the Real Presence of Christ in
the Eucharist.

3dly, As to the Arguments, which
undertake to shew the Impossibility of
of this Doctrin, there has been enough
said

said to the Principal of them, for making a Judgment, whether there be any Clear and Certain Proof in them; besides, there must be a general Uncertainty in all the Attempts of our Weak Reason, undertaking to discover the utmost Extent, and settle the Limits of the Almighty Power of God.

4thly, As to the Authority declaring positively in behalf of this Doctrine, I think it cannot Clearly and Certainly be prov'd, that the Authority appearing against it, is more to be depended on, as being better qualified for Knowing or Judging of the Truth. For, *First*, If the Learning and Piety of the Persons assembled to consider the Truth of what was propos'd, be consider'd, there is no Advantage can be prov'd in the Authority declaring against this Doctrine. *2dly*, If the Number of them be examin'd, the Advantage is much on the other side. *3dly*, If the Circumstance of Time; those, who had a full Hearing of the Cause, when the Matter was first question'd, had much the Advantage of those, who call'd it over again many Hundred Years after, and were better circumstanc'd for Judging, whether it was a Doctrine, that had insensibly crept in, or had been universal-ly

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ly believ'd by the foregoing Ages, and
receiv'd from the Primitive Church.
4thly, If the Probability of being over-
rul'd by Interest or Passion be consi-
der'd, it is certain, that the Former
had as great an Interest in Truth, as the
Latter; whilst they could not so Ca-
nonically advance a Superstitious Do-
ctrin for an Article of Faith, but to
their own Condemnation. And as for
being over-aw'd by any Temporal
Power, or Worldly Convenience, there
is much greater Probability of this in
the Pastors of One Nation, than in the
Prelates of many Nations; who have
no one Temporal Power to Awe them,
but are more Independent in the Decla-
ration of Truth. 5thly, If the Decision
of a Church Representative Canonically
assembled in its Pastors, has ever been
the Means for ending Controversie a-
mongst the Faithful; then the Former
Authority, being Universal and Cano-
nically, has much the Advantage of the
Latter, which, being only National,
and of a Part assembled, without any
Subordination to the Whole Body, of
which it was a Part, cannot, according
to the Principles of Hierachy, be esteem-
ed either Universal or Canonical. Last-
ly, If there be any Confidence in the
Holy

Holy Ghost Assisting and Directing the Church in the Decision of Controversie, and Leading her, as Christ Promis'd, into Truth; then the Former has much the Advantage, which, being assembled, according to the Method of the Church, in like Cases, in all foregoing Ages, and consisting of Pastors succeeding the Apostles, might with more solid Grounds depend on this Divine Assistance, than an Assembly of One Nation, which could not be esteem'd the Catholic Church Representative; and being a Part assembled to condemn the whole, became separated from it, and by this Illegal Act forfeited all Claim to those Promises, which were made to the Whole Body.

Thus, to whatever Head we turn, tho' we find Objections, (and such there are against the Fundamentals of Christianity) yet they are not such, as with Clearness and Certainty prove any thing for the overthrowing this Doctrine; Education, and a Prepossess'd Mind, may give them some Advantage; but, examin'd by Calm Reason, they are so far from having it, that however this Doctrine lyes under the Scandal of being against Reason, yet I cannot see, but that a Man must

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do Violence to the Principles of the best Reason, who does not believe it. The Doctrin of Transubstantiation being no more than a Consequence of this, it stands upon the same Principles, and therefore needs no farther Consideration. Those, at least, who have positively subscrib'd against it, ought to rest Silent; since, if they consider it, there is the same Power and Certainty necessary for pronouncing *Anathema* against this Doctrin, as for defining it; as much to say absolutely, *It is not*, as *It is*. And if such Power and Certainty be not allow'd in a more Universal Assembly of the Whole Church, upon what Title can it be claim'd in a Part? But I must not now enlarge; let thy Heavenly Light, O God, accompany the Readers, and then what has been said, will be sufficient to lead them to the Truth.

Third Sunday after Pentecost.

HAVING proceeded so far upon this Subject of the Eucharist, there is one Point, belonging to it, which must not be omitted, and that is *Communion in One Kind*. That, which makes the

the Difficulty, is, because Receiving in One Kind is absolutely contrary to what Christ did at the Institution of it, and seems as contrary to his Express Command, given at the same time, when he said, upon delivering the Cup, *Drink you all of this.*

It is certain, at the Last Supper, Christ Bless'd and gave the Sacrament in Both Kinds; and it is certain, that, in Virtue of his thus Blessing it, and giving it to his Apostles, there is no Formal or Express Obligation upon the Laity of thus Receiving it; because the Institution and Dispensing it to his Apostles contains no Express Command to the Laity, which alone can bind them, the Ground of such an Obligation.

The only Question therefore can be, whether those Words of Christ, *Drink you all of this*, when he deliver'd the Cup, must necessarily be understood as a Command to the Laity, of Drinking of it? And for the Solution of this Question, it must, *First*, Be own'd, that, according to the account given us by the Evangelists, none were Present, when these Words were spoke but the Apostles only. *2dly*, It must be own'd, that all the Commands, which Christ

Christ gave to his Apostles, and are recorded in the Gospel, cannot be understood, as an Obligation upon the Laity: As when he commanded them, *Go and teach all Nations*, none can presume, that the Laity, are all enjoin'd to be Preachers. 3^{dly}, It must be own'd by the Learned, that all the Words, which Christ spoke at his Last Supper, cannot be suppos'd as address'd to the Laity: For these know that when he said, *Do this in Remembrance of me*, he gave his Apostles Power and Commission to do what he had there done; that is, to Bless and Consecrate the Bread and Wine, and in this gave them so far the Order of Priesthood; there being no other Words extant in Holy Writ, in Virtue of which they can Claim this Particular Power, but only these alone. Whence all these will agree, that these Words were directed to the Apostles only, and that the Laity are not thus concern'd in them. And now if these Particulars be acknowledg'd, that the Apostles only were Present with Christ at his Last Supper; That all that Christ spoke to the Apostles on other Occasions, or even at his Last Supper, cannot be directed to the Laity; whence can it be prov'd, that these

these Words, *Drink you all of this*, are design'd as a Command to them?

The Primitive Church did not understand them as a Command to the Laity; as may be gather'd from their Practice of administering the Sacrament to them on several Occasions in One Kind only; as to the Sick, to Travelers to carry with them on their Journey, to Infants, to the Abstemious, or such as could not Drink Wine. Now this being a Practice amongst the Primitive Christians, it must be confess'd, that they judg'd it both Lawful and Profitable to receive it in this Manner; and consequently, that there was no Command to the contrary; since they could not judge it Lawful or Profitable to do what they believ'd contrary to Christ's Command.

2dly, The Church, in After-ages, did not understand those Words, as a Command to the Laity, since they order'd their Receiving in One Kind: which they could not have done, had the Sense of those Words been deliver'd down by the foregoing Ages of the Church, as a Command to the Laity.

3dly, Several Eminent Men of the Reformation have declar'd their Sentiments to be, that Christ left no Command

mand, for the Laity to Receive in Both Kinds. As Luther in his Epistle to the Bohemians. *Altho' it would be Decent, says he, to receive the Sacrament in Both Kinds, and Christ has left no necessary Precept in this matter; yet it would be much better to keep Peace, than to contend about Both Kinds. And again, if you come to a Place, where the Sacrament is given in One Kind only, receive it in One.* De Utr. Spe. Spalatensis comes near to Luther, declaring, That the Receiving the Sacrament in Both Kinds, is not so under a Precept, but upon a considerable Cause, tho' Private, and of Private Persons, it may profitably and lawfully be receiv'd under the Species of Bread alone. And this, he says, is evident from the Practice of the Antient and Primitive Christians. De Rep. Ecel. l. 5. c. 6. Bishop Forbes agrees with this Prelate; for having approv'd the administering the Cup to the Laity; yet in Casaubon's Words, *We always except, says he, some Special Cases, in which we willingly allow it sufficient to give the Sacrament in One Kind.* De Euch. l. 2. c. 1. And then he advises the Reading a Book writ by Cassander: 'Tis worth the Reading, says he, where he shows, that sometimes in the Primitive Church, the Sacrament was Ad-

minister'd under One Kind; but this only in Private, or on some extraordinary Occasions, or in case of Necessity, viz. to the Sick, to the Abstemious, to Infants, to Travellers. And then in the next Chapter, he discovers the Mistake, in which many in his time were, and now are, which comes nearest to the present purpose: Most good People, says he, desire to receive the Cup; but the generality found their desire not upon good Reason; because they think, Christ did so absolutely command the receiving it, and conceive it to be so necessary, that at no time the true Sacrament of the Body of Christ could be administer'd under One Kind: Which Opinion puts them upon condemning the Church of Rome, and revolting from it: For as to the Practice of that Church, 'tis what we neither oppose, says this Great Man, nor condemn, nor prophanely deride. Bishop White of Ely in the same manner acknowledges the Receiving in Both Kinds not to be in force of any Precept recorded in Scripture, but to have place only among Traditions receiv'd without Writing: Such Traditions, says he, are those that follow; the Delivery of the Communion to the Laity in Both Kinds, &c. Treat. on the Sab. p. 97. Bishop Montague of Chichester speaks to the whole

whole Point yet more fully: *Where is there a Command, says he, in Scripture, of Baptizing Infants, or of Administering the Sacrament, to such as Communicate, in Both Kinds? Of these we can say; the Scripture teaches no such thing; the Scripture does not deliver these things.* Mount. Orig. p. 97.

Thus do these Learned Men, tho' not in Communion with the Church, agree with the Church; *First, That there is no Command in Scripture for the Laity to Receive in Both Kinds. 2dly, That it is lawful and profitable to Receive in One Kind. 3dly, That the Primitive Christians, on several Occasions, did Administer the Communion in One Kind, and that, on the like, it may be so Administer'd now. And these Concessions have not only this ground in Scripture, that there are no Words found in it importing such a Command, but likewise, that among the Expressions, which seem to relate to the Holy Communion, there is sometimes mention only of Breaking of Bread. And S. Paul, 1 Cor. 11. speaking directly of this Subject, having repeated both Eating and Drinking, which signifie Both Kinds, adds, v. 27. Eating or Drinking, which imports no*

more than One ; and tho' it be not thus translated by some, who put *and* instead of *or*, yet it is *Eateth* or *Drinketh* in the *Greek* Copies, from which their Translation is taken.

These Concessions make it needless to press the Common Difficulties out of the Sixth Chapter of *S. John* ; for it being now granted by so good Authority, that there is no Command in Scripture upon this Subject, there can be therefore none in *S. John*, or any other part of that Sacred Volume : And those Words, which there come nearest a Command, are not to be understood, as carrying the force of such a Precept with them. But however, to say a Word more in Particular ; this Chapter of *S. John* cannot be well urg'd against the Church, by such, as are not of her Communion ; because their Divines generally hold, that nothing in this Chapter has relation to the present Subject of the Eucharist. But if it be urg'd ; then it may be observ'd by ordinary Readers ; that as some Part of it raises the Difficulty, so other Parts of it again take it away, in the Promises of Everlasting Life to such, as Receive under the Form of Bread alone.

He that Eats of this Bread shall live for e-

ver, v. 58. *If any Man Eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever, v. 51. The Bread, that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the Life of the World.* Here are repeated Promises of Salvation to such, as Receive in One Kind; which would be a very great Absurdity, were there any Express Command of Christ, for all to receive in Both. It being impossible, Christ should Promise Everlasting Life to such, as do contrary to his Command; which those would certainly do, who Receive in One Kind, were there any Command of his for Receiving in Both. The Promises therefore of Salvation being made in this Chapter expressly to those, that Receive in One Kind, and to those, that Receive in Both; the Catholic Church therefore approves Both ways of Administring the H. Communion, as equally conducive to Eternal Life, and has sometimes given it in One Kind, and sometimes in Both.

And the Reason of these Promises may give Light to the present Difficulty. For it being Christ our Lord, who is the Fountain of all Grace, and the Author of our Good, our only Means of Salvation must depend on him; it must proceed from the Com-

munication of himself to us, and our being United to him. Now the most Effectual Means for this, according to his own Institution, being from Receiving him in the B. Eucharist, and according to the constant Doctrine of the Catholic Church, Christ being equally Present in One Kind, and in Both, hence Receiving in either Way is Partaking of the Author of our Salvation, and hence it can be no wonder, that the Promises of Salvation are made to Both. He then, that Receives in Both Kinds, receives Christ, and he that receives in One Kind, receives Christ; so that, tho' there be a difference as to the *Manner of Receiving*, yet there is none, as to the *Thing Received*, it is Christ in One Kind, and Christ in Both.

Whether therefore the Faithful Receive in Both Kinds, or in One, they still Receive both the Body and Blood of Christ, which is the Substance of all, that is requir'd in the Sixth Chapter of S. *John*; and in this they have the Great and Necessary Help to Salvation, Christ Jesus; and while they possess him, it cannot be justly pretended, that they are defrauded of any thing; since beyond him the Infirm Soul

Soul can desire no other Help, the Afflicted no other Comfort, and the Pious Soul no other Object of her Love. Jesus is All, and whoever has Jesus, in him has All. And in this there is no Distinction made betwixt Priest and People; since the Priests, whenever they are to Communicate, as on *Manday Thursday*, or in time of Sicknes, and at the Hour of Death, never Receive, but as the People do, in One Kind. And when they do otherwise, it is only, when they Exercise the Order of Priesthood, and Consecrate the Bread and Wine, which being the Sacrifice of the New Law, they have then a Command of Christ, for Offering and Receiving Both, so more expressly to Commemorate his Death on the Cross, where his Blood being Shed, the Cup is Receiv'd apart

Upon the whole therefore, it being allow'd by most Authentic Testimonies of Men Eminent in all Communions, and by the Practice of the Primitive Church, that the Eucharist may be lawfully and profitably Administer'd in One Kind, when there are due Reasons for it; the Church cannot be justly condemn'd, much less forsaken, on this account; since her Decree for re-

quiring thee to Receive in One Kind, is occasion'd by Motives, which she judg'd (and she is the Best Judge) Reasonable and Sufficient for it. Some of these Reasons were; *First*, Because of the great danger of Shedding the Cup, which might easily happen amongst such great Numbers of Communicants. Those, who have seen the Crowds at *Easter* Communion, of Thirty Thousand Communicants in one Parish Church, as 'tis in some of *Paris*, may easily apprehend this danger. *2dly*, Because of the great Difficulty of some Countries being provided with True Wine, necessary for this Holy Mytery; of which difficulty we have had some Experience in our Wars, when the Scarcity of Wine has been supplied by Artificial Compositions, which tho' undiscernable, must be an Abomination at the Altar. *3dly*, For the Condemnation of their Error, who taught, that Whole Christ was not Receiv'd under either Kinds; but his Body only under the Form of Bread, and his Blood only under the Form of Wine: Which being contrary to the Truth of the Catholic Faith, this Truth is now Taught and Imprinted by the present Practice of Receiving in One Kind. These are some of

of the Motives for this Decree, which being in a Matter of Disciplin only, and not of Faith, is subject to Alteration according to Circumstances; and those, who think them not sufficient, are in this Unreasonable at least, in setting up their own Reason against the Judgment of the Church; which is contrary to the Rule of the Gospel. Direct all Christians, O God, in this Point, and permit none to raise to themselves Scandals thro' their own Presumption or Mistake. Thy Church has Commission from Thee, and by thy Authority it teaches. Who can say as much of their own Judgment? Where then can be the Wisdom of Forsaking the Church, as Insufficient, and then Trusting on that, which every Day giving fresh Proofs of its Mistakes in Ordinary Matters, is Evidence against it self, and shews how little 'tis to be depended on in Matters of greater difficulty? Direct all, O God.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

HAVING often given some Hints of the Perverseness of the World,
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and of its Ways being generally Contrary to the Ways of Christ and his Gospel, I will now, on this Sunday, speak more in particular of it, both for their Comfort, who have forsaken or overcome it, and for their Instruction, who are either overcome by it, or in danger of being so, thro' the good Opinion they have of its Innocence. And for drawing this vast Subject into One Point, I will examin, how far the World is mistaken, in what it esteems *Great* and *Happy*, by which a True Judgment may be made of all that belongs to it.

To take true Measures here, we must first see, what it is to be *Great* or *Happy* in this World, according to the Principles of the Gospel. And here, upon the first Glance, we presently discover; that as the whole design of the Gospel is directed to a Life to come; so there is nothing, which, according to this Christian Scheme, can be esteem'd *Happy* or *Great*, even in this World, but only that alone, which being approv'd and recommended by the Gospel, can be hence justly esteem'd the Way to the Happiness or Greatness of the Life to come. And what things are these? They are too Obvious, to become any
Matter

Matter of Surprize : These are ; to be Humble and Meek, to be Poor in Spirit, to Suffer with Patience all kinds of Evils, to Forgive Injuries, to do Good for Evil, to Help others, in whatever way, they may want our help, &c. These are markt out by the Gospel, and, by the Promises annext to them, particularly distinguish'd, as the Means or Ways to Eternal Happiness ; and therefore those, who Practise them, must, according to the Standard of the Gospel, be esteem'd truly Happy and Great.

Now, if we turn to the World, and make a Judgment of what is Great and Happy, according to the System, it approves, and according to the Value it sets upon things, we need no more than another Glance here to discover, that Greatness and Happiness take their Degrees from all, that belongs to Pride, Ambition, State, Idleness, Excess, Riches, Curiosity, and the Satisfaction of Unprofitable, if not Vicious Inclinations. Thus is Happiness sought in the World ; and according as People have it in their Power to satisfy the demands of these Corrupt Passions, so, in Proportion, they esteem themselves, and are esteem'd by others Happy and Great.

If this can be suppos'd True, and Common Practice sufficiently speaks the Truth of it, I Summon all Christians, to give in their Opinion, whether the World be Mistaken? And whether its Ways are not Contrary to the Ways of Christ? For if Christ, both by Doctrine and Example, recommended the Practice of such things, which lead to Eternal Happiness, and have the Promise of such Happiness annex to them; is not the World Contrary to him in encouraging such things, as are either an absolute Barr against all future Happiness, or, at least, evidently put it to the Hazard? If Christ Commands Humility and Meekness, and the World sets a Mark of Contempt upon them: If Christ requires his Followers to make War against Pride and Ambition, and the World promotes them: If Christ demands Self-denial, and Taking up the Cross, and the World is for having all Passions gratified, applauds Idleness, Curiosity and Excess: If Christ invites to Alms, and Relieving the distress'd with whatever can be spar'd, and the World encourages Prodigality, and Wasting, upon Pomp, Vanity, Luxury and Intemperance, what otherwise might be the Subsistence of the Poor:

IF

If Christ enjoins all to Pardon Injuries, and the World lays a Scandal on those, who will not Revenge them. If thus, the World, not only in these, but all other Particulars, sets up for an Interest quite opposit to the Gospel, rendering all that Contemptible, which Christ Commands, and Applauding all that, which Christ Condemns; what must the Judgment be, but that the Ways of the World are Contrary to the Ways of Christ; and that what is Infamy, Scandal and Folly to the World, is the True, Solid Greatness of a Christian?

If this be a Rational Conclusion, according to the Principles of Faith; what then must be the next? But that all those, whatever their Profession be, who Live and Act according to the Principles of the World, are Children of the World, but no Disciples of Christ. And what then must be said of the great Crowd of the World, whom we see earnestly pursuing the Ways of Pride, Ambition, Covetousness, Prodigality, Intemperance, Injustice, Revenge, &c.? What can be said; but that either the Gospel is no Gospel, or that these are no Christians: Their Practices are so Contrary to the Gospel, that nothing more favorably can be said of them. And

And does not this now condemn the whole Generation of Mankind? For what between the Common Modes of Dressing, Furniture, Table, Retinue, Unnecessary Expences, Love of Money, Preferment, and the common Practices of Self-love, &c. who can pretend to be exempt? If none are exempt (tho' I have Reason to hope, many are) it is not I condemn them, but the Gospel, which denounces Woes against such Practices; it is not I condemn them, but their own Extravagancies, who professing a Knowledge of God's Will, and that this is the Rule, by which those must live, who are to be sav'd, quite forsake this Rule, throughout their whole Lives, and yet wonder at those, who are so bold, to call in question their Salvation.

And is it then to be question'd in earnest? This seems very hard, whilst the whole World is engag'd in the Method here reprov'd. No, the whole World is not: And as for those that are, I pronounce not against One of them, because I see not their Hearts; but I say, as much as there is of Pride, of the Love of the World, of Prodigality in their Dress, Furniture, Table, or Retinue; as much as there is of Extravagance

travagance in their Expences; of the Love of Money or Applause, in their daily Labors, or in the Preferments, they seek, so far they depart from the Gospel, and if the Gospel be the Way to Salvation, so far they are in danger of being Lost Eternally.

This may look severe to those, who find themselves here concern'd; but what can be abated? Does not the Gospel teach, as has been here declar'd? And is it to be observ'd, or no? Is the Manifestation of God's Will no more than a Ceremony, and the Promulgation of his Judgments, nothing but a Religious Scarecrow, for the Terror of tender Consciences? If so, then all those are in the right, who either wonder at, or despise this Doctrine. But if we are to be Judg'd by the Gospel, and receive Sentence according to our Works, then it ought to be neither Matter of Wonder nor Scorn, to be told, that the Gospel is to be follow'd, and that such as follow it not, are not in the Way of Salvation.

And is then no Distinction to be made between Rich and Poor? Is nothing to be allow'd to Decency, or for Difference of Degree? Nothing in Cloaths, Furniture,

Furniture, Table, or State? I say not so; and yet I say, according to the Rule of the Gospel, Pride and Extravagance are not to be allow'd to make the Distinction; and therefore since these are forbid in the Christian's Catechism, nay, since every Christian, with a Solemn Renunciation abjures them at the Font, every one of this Profession, if he be in earnest, is to retrench all that, which is the Effect of these abjur'd Principles. What this may be, and how far in Particular, this every one must determin for themselves, by examining their own Hearts. And when the discovery is made, if their Corruption be too strong for them, or the World stands in their Way, they may thence make this Judgment of themselves; that however the Gospel be the Rule they pretend to follow, yet in Reality they follow it not, but are over-rul'd by other Principles, which are not of Christ: And then by applying to themselves this Principle of Christ, *He that is not with me, is against me*, let them tell me, where is their hopes of belonging to Christ, and of receiving the Reward of Eternal Life from him?

O God, if the World be thus Contrary

trary to thee, how Miserable are they that follow it? How truly Inconsiderable, Mean, and even Contemptible are they, who are no otherwise Great or Happy, than in that Greatness and Happiness, which the World esteems? O God, undeceive, I beseech thee, all deluded Souls, and give them a better Understanding of what they Profess: Deliver them from that Blindness, which a wretched Education and Custom have brought upon them, and make them sensible, that the only Greatness of a Christian, is to live up to those Rules, which Christ has given them.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

HAVING touch'd last *Sunday* at the mistaken Greatness of the World, I cannot part with this Subject; but must consider it yet again more in retail; by examining the common Principles of Human Greatness, and seeing how little they Contribute to that true Greatness, which belongs to a Christian. There are many Heads, from which Men raise themselves in the Opinion of

of the World, and upon which they are really valued in the World; these now I must consider.

First, Quality and Nobility of Blood: This has many Temporal Advantages in it, for which it deserves Respect, and having an Influence upon the Mind, fits it for Great and Generous Undertakings, in which it is to be admir'd. And yet if Quality of Blood be not accompanied with Virtue, if it becomes False to God, by Sinful Practices; False to Men, by Injustice or Oppression; False to Truth, by Lying and Deceit; all the Quality of Blood is of no Value, according to the Rate of the Gospel, but is Base and Contemptible, and has nothing Honorable or Great in it. Whence those, who seek Alliance with Quality, without regard to Virtue, do not act upon Principles of the Gospel, but of the World, and in this are not Christians.

2dly, Titles of Honor, Places of Preferment, Favor of Princes, give Christians Opportunity of being Instruments of great Good. But if Christians in these Circumstances abuse the Advantages they have, and turning all to Ambition, prostitute their Power and Consciences to Private Interest, they

they are then not Great, but Infamous in the Christian Scheme.

3dly, State, Retinue, and all kinds of Pomp, draw the Eyes of admiring Crowds, and yet all this Greatness, if it be the Effect of Pride, or of an Envious and Ambitious Heart, by the Measures of the Gospel, is as Contemptible as that Pride, which gives Birth to it, so that, while the World adores it as Heavenly, God and his Angels, rank it with Devils.

4thly, An Imperious Temper, and carrying it high, so as to despise Inferiours, and not to allow Equals, is what obliges Dependance to Respect, and has the Air of something Great; but Weigh it in the Gospel Balance, and it will appear as Light as Smoke, and its Value will be the same, as of Pride, and Self conceit.

5thly, Riches gain Esteem, and may be serviceable to very good Purposes; but if they are either gain'd unjustly, or lov'd immoderately, or hoarded up unprofitably, or wasted prodigally, and those better uses neglected, to which they ought to be applied, then in our Rule, *Dives* encompass'd with Plenty, and Glorious to the Eyes of Men, is

is more Miserable than *Lazarus*, that lies Neglected at the Door.

6thly, Fine Cloaths, tho' such, as to be follow'd by the admiring Eyes of all, that come in Sight, add nothing to the Christian's Value; but as far as Pride, Vanity, Envy, or Self-esteem, has a Hand in purchasing or putting them on, so far is this Fine Figure the Scorn of Heaven; and if there be a Vicious Soul under that expensive Cover, then Filth is their Character, and their true Emblem is in being *Moving Tombs*, which have nothing but Corruption and Rottenness under Walls of State.

7thly, Beauty is to be rank'd with the former; for there is no Beauty in our Rule, but what is in the Soul; this is what Heaven regards alone, and if the other be without this, it is then the same in the Heathen and Christian, and as Time will equally disfigure them, so like Rottenness consume, and the same Eternity devour them.

8thly, Generous and Brave Actions, such as gain Reputation, and leave Monuments both of History and Marble, are nothing in the Christian account. For if the Cause does not raise their Value, the Doom of the Actors will be proportion'd to their Ambiti-

Ambition, and what then can it be,
out of Misery?

9thly, A Plentiful Table, Noble House, Rich Furniture, a Purse to answer all the demands of Curiosity and Apperite, Time at Command for whatever pleases, &c. are considerable Advantages, and such, as the World calls Happiness, and yet, according to the Gospel-reck'ning, are no more than the Happiness of the Stage, which may be accompanied with real Misery and Infamy; and such is the Character of all under these Enjoyments, who Prostitute all to Self-love, and live unmindful of a future State.

Lastly, Learning, Abilities in Preaching or Writing, Great Wit, Good Understanding, Church-Preferment, Rich Benefices, Reputation of Piety, Large Alms, Noble Foundations for the Distress'd, &c. are things that sound great in the World; and yet if these are only the Support or Effect of a Vain Humor, if they are not level'd at Eternity, and directed to their right End, they make no more than a Scribe or Pharisee in the Gospel, and the Woes pronounc'd against these, will be their Fate, who thus abuse what is Sa-

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cred, and endeavor to raise to themselves Monuments upon Holy Ground.

Here is the true Character, drawn according to the Principles of the Gospel, of all the things, which the World principally admires; And if this be true, then let Christians be their own Judges, how much they act contrary to what they profess, as often as they make use of these False Measures of the World, as often as by these they Regulate their Desires or Labors, and according to these are Industrious to seek Greatness for themselves or their Children. It is certain, that in these Desires, and in all their Solitude for the Accomplishment of these Desires, they are carried on like Heathens, and they can give no Proof of being enlighten'd by Faith, or having any Advantage in the Gospel; since these very things, which an Infidel Naturally admires, they admire still, and seek them with the same Assurance, as if the Gospel had given no caution against them, or had not propos'd to them the search of more Substantial and Everlasting Goods. Must it not then here be set down, that whatever Proposals Christians have of Raising themselves on theirs upon any of the Principles and Motives

nives above-mention'd, they in this proceed, not as Christians, but as Heathens; that whatever Money they either lay up or expend upon the same Motives, they act, not as Christians, but Heathens; that where-ever the general Business of Life is upon such Proposals, and the Execution of them there, the Life is so far, not Christian, but Heathen?

What then, O God, is the State of the Christian World, whilst, besides some Chosen Ones, whom thou hast rais'd above the Earth, the greatest number of those, who profess thy Name, are carried away by the Charms of Worldly Goods, study all that is Vain, are influenced by Pride, admire the Applause of Men, Sacrifice Justice to Interest, are eager for Preferments, Riches and State; have Curiosity and Extravagance to command their Purses, and either Covetous Labor or Vicious Idleness their Time? Thus they live themselves; thus they breed up their Children, and by the same Principles dispose of them. And these however are not the Scandalous Ones, as being exempt from notorious Vice, and yet Scandalous enough, whilst they despise thy Gospel, and live according to the World,

World, which thou hast declar'd to be an Enemy to thee.

How contrary is all this to the Example of our B. Redeemer, by whose Blood, as we have been Rescued from Death, so by his Spirit, we know, we ought to live! But where is his Spirit, whilst in whatever we do, there appears nothing but the Spirit of the World: Our Time, our Money, our Life, being all subject to Pride, Luxury and Prodigality; and all those other Evils being receiv'd into Commission, which, according to the Rule given us, ought not to be admitted, where Christ is Profess'd. Quite otherwise have those done, who have in earnest follow'd their Master: The First Disciples wholly abandon'd the World, that they might Walk in his Steps: Infinite Numbers afterwards did as entirely forsake it, in giving their Lives for him: And how many of those, who either escap'd or surviv'd the Persecution, forsook it too, by parting with all that, which was not absolutely Necessary for Life, and daily contriving with how little of it they could live? This has been the Method ever since of those, who have seriously resolv'd to follow Christ, by separating from

from the World, and allowing of no other Wants, but what are within the compass of Necessity. If this has been the Rule of those, who have endeavor'd to follow Christ; what must their Character be, who live daily Coveting and Grasping at the World, enlarge their Appetite by all the Provocations, that can be invented; instead of Necessity, have Pride to Dress them; instead of Necessity, have a Debauch'd Appetite to provide their Table; instead of Necessity, have Ambition and an unsatiable Curiosity to furnish their Houses; in fine, have all the Passions of a Corrupt Nature, and all the Customs of a Vicious World for their Counsel, how they may more and more be involv'd in it? O God, when wilt thou open the Eyes of this Perverse World, and make it more Sincere to what thou hast taught it!

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON last Sunday I pointed at in Particular the Various Mistakes of the World, and at their perverse Blindness, who say, they are Disciples of
H Christ,

Christ, and yet follow the World. Now I must consider the Plea, these Christians (so they call themselves) make in their own Defence.

First, They have an Apology for their Pride from the Practice of the Church, which makes use of the Richest Ornaments and Vessels in the Service of the Altar, and raises the most Magnificent Structures, that Art can reach to. Then from the Example of Churchmen, who keep up as great State, and as Plentiful Tables, as any others, who are here reprov'd as Worldlings, for what they do. But nothing of this, if duly consider'd, makes for their purpose. For what if Magnificent Churches be rais'd, and the Richest Ornaments and Vessels us'd at the Altar? These are all due to God, and 'tis Just he should be honor'd by the Best of his Creatures. God himself order'd this, when he commanded a Temple to be Built and Furnish'd for his Worship. And that Magnificence was no Part of the Ceremonial Law, but was due to his Service; and if due then, is much more so now, when being more Glorious in his Mercies, he ought to be more Glorious in his Worship. And if there was any Figure in that State,

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it was principally of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and for comprehending the Majesty of his Infinite Being: And we being yet in a Figure as to all that is yet to come, we have still the same Reason for Glorifying him in the same Manner, and for giving the Faithful the same Helps for raising their Hearts towards God, and their Desires to the Possession of what is Eternal. And what is this now to Man? Is the Sinner to be Honor'd, because God is to be Glorified? Let but Man look into himself, and he will see there so much of Unworthiness and Misery, that he must confess Contempt and Reproach to be his due: And how then can it be Just to Decree Honors for himself, and contrive all Ways to draw Respect; when knowing he deserves none, he must know this to be Detestable Injustice and Usurpation?

And what if he has the Example of Church-men? As far as there is Pride or Excess in what they do, so far it is more Sinful in them, than in others, and therefore not proper to be made a President. S. Chrysostom thus gives his Opinion of Priests; *Non arbitror inter Sacerdotes multos esse, qui salvi fiant, sed multo plures, qui pereant.* Ho. 3. in

Act. I am of Opinion, that among Priests, not many are sav'd, but that much the greater Number are damn'd. If there be Reason to apprehend this True, then there can be no Reason to make an Example of all they do; lest this should prove the making one Evil the Apology for another.

The Money however Christians Spend, they say, is their own, and why then may they not Spend it to their own use? It is their own, as Stewards only; for, in regard of God, they can no otherwise esteem themselves; since all they have, is receiv'd from him, and to him an account must be given of it. And tho' a good account may be given of what they use; yet not of that, which they abuse. Now to discover what they abuse, they are not to reckon as Heathens, but as Christians; and to themselves I refer the Matter; so that I will set all that down, as not Abus'd, which can pass for a Reasonable Expence, according to Christian Reason.

And here, I desire to know of them, when a Person lays out Money upon what might be excus'd, and takes little or no Care of Necessaries, whether this be a Disposal of Money according to Reason?

Reason? What then must all their Expences be, when they scatter their Money according to Inclination, and pass by those better Ways, in which it might be serviceable to their Salvation, which is the Only Thing Necessary? Can these pass for Reasonable Expences, according to Christian Reason?

2dly, Can it be a Reasonable Expence, when Money is there laid out, where it does themselves Harm; and there spar'd, where it might do them Good? Let them then consider the Estates they Wear on their Backs, they Spend at their Tables, they Hang upon their Walls, they Set up in their Closets, they Leave at Play-houses and Taverns, they Waste in Retinue and State, &c. Is not the greatest Part of this Expence to serve Vanity, Curiosity, Idleness and Intemperance? And what are these, according to Christian Reason, but Real Evils, such as they ought to be more afraid of than the Plague, as being truly Plagues to the Soul, such as threaten it with Eternal Death? And if they look over these Expences again and see, that with this very Money they might have Reliev'd Thousands of Poor, Cloath'd the Naked, Redeem'd Prisoners, brought Comfort to

the Orphan and Widow, and thus laid up for themselves Treasures in Heaven against the Day of their Distress; is it not plain to their Confusion, that they have laid out their Money, where it has done themselves Harm, and there spar'd it, where it might have done them Good? And how then can these pass for Reasonable Expences, according to Christian Reason? To Buy Poyson with Money, that is Necessary for Bread; and for the Sick to be at a Charge for whatever is most likely to enflame their Distemper, would be as much agreeable to the Principles of Common Reason, as these Expences are to the Reason of the Gospel. And must they not then be set down as Abuses of what has been entrusted with them? And how then can this be a defence to them who have receiv'd whatever they possess, in Trust only, and must give in the Particulars of their Administration?

If this Plea will not do, what must Christians do, that live in the World? Would you have them be Ridiculous? They are so already in the highest degree, in Buying Smoke, Vapor and Shadow with that, which might be the Purchase of Heaven. But they will be

be laugh'd at, if they do otherwise. Then the Question is, whether they must be really Mad, that they may not be Pointed at by those, who are so? I would encourage Civility, as much as another; but I would have the Matter consider'd, when the Complement expected is likely to be too chargeable. If parting with my Reason be the Condition of the Civility, I think it is much too Dear, and much more so, if nothing would serve, but to Jump into Hell, or Walk leisurely into it, which is much at one. If this be what the World expects (and this it does expect, in setting up for all those Ways, which are condemn'd in the Gospel) then I am rather for venturing its Displeasure, than purchasing its Favor at so high a Rate. I had rather be laugh'd at by a Mad World, than become Reprobate to the Gospel, and be damn'd.

But however I cannot but think, there is a Medium; and that a Christian may so live in the World, as not to join with it in its Follies, and yet not to be Ridiculous. Instead of Rules for this, I propose the Practice of some; for some there are, who may be Examples; those, who use seasonable Recrea-

tions, without living an Idle Life ; who know how to be Clean and Decent, without coming up to the Extravagance of the Mode ; who maintain their Degree, without satisfying Ambition ; who provide a Table, without making it an Altar to Appetite ; who entertain Friends as Persons of Reason and Faith, and not as Brutes ; who are Cheerful without being Mad ; who observe Disciplin, without the Rigor of the Cloyster, or the Liberties of Unbelievers ; who have a Purse open to Reasonable Conveniencies of Life, without the Slavish Solitude of the Miser, or the Prodigality of a Vain and Curious Humor, which is ever upon the itch, and never to be satisfied Some of these there are in the World, tho' almost as Rare, as the Just in *Sodom* : The Method of these may be an Example, tho' with this Caution still, that the nearer Persons come to the Rules of *Necessity* and *Sufficiency*, the more they will have the Commendations of the Gospel ; the nearer they will come to the Example of Christ, who being the Eternal Wisdom of his Father, gives Christians the best Instructions how to be Wise, much better than they can learn from the World. And if they are Wise according

ing to Christ, what matters it, if the World calls them Fools? To be like their Master, ought not to be their Fear, but their Desire; nor their Grief, but their Glory. Inspire, O Jesus, all thy Followers with the Admiration and Love of thy Example, that they may value no other Wisdom or Greatness, but what thou hast taught them, and despise all that the World calls so, which, under better Names, is nothing but Baseness and Folly.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

HAVING discours'd, on the forgoing *Sundays*, of the True Greatness, which belongs to a Christian in this Life; now must be consider'd the Means proper for obtaining it. And whoever has but glanced at it, must see, that there is no Possibility of coming to it, but by the Government of all those Inclinations, which carry us towards the World; upon which Consideration I here set down *Temperance*, as one of the most General Means, and absolutely Necessary for obtaining that Happiness, of which we have hitherto

discours'd, and which consists in Following Christ, and not the World. By Temperance here I do not understand it, as it prescribes Rules only in Meat and Drink; but in a more general Sense, as it tempers all the Motions of our Soul and Body and keeps them under such a just Reins, as to prevent all kinds of Excess.

This Temperance is what all Christians ought earnestly to Desire, Pray for, and by all ways be Industrious, to obtain; for since Corruption has mixt it self with our Nature, we have no Faculty, either of Mind or Body, but what is subject to variety of Sinful Excess; so that, if by Temperance, they are not moderated and kept under Government, we cannot possibly escape the guilt of repeated and endless Crimes; and how far then must we necessarily be from that Disposition, which makes the Christian's Happiness?

According therefore to the variety of our Inclinations, in which we are apt to exceed, so must our Temperance be multiplied, or, at least, so many several Gaurds must it set, for preventing Disorder. We are subject to Excess in Meat and Drink, in Apparel, in Sleeping,

Sleeping, in all that is Carnal or Sensual in us. In these Particulars then, it being discover'd, that Gluttony and a vitiated Appetite are ever ready to give their Orders at the Table; Intemperance to command the Glasses; Vanity the Cloaths; Laziness the Sleep; and Sensuality whatever can be serviceable to this Passion. Temperance observes the Danger or the Disorder, and examining how far these Evils usurp upon Right, endeavors to bring all to Rule and Measure. She considers the Ends, which Nature requires to be satisfied in all our Wants, as in Eating, Cloathing, Sleeping, &c. and having seen, what is necessary to satisfy those Ends, she there publishes her Declaration; so far is Necessity, so far Nature and the God of Nature requires; so far is Just, so far is a Duty. And because this cannot be so nicely judg'd, as to be brought to a Point, she therefore allows some Latitude in it; and as to whatever so far exceeds what Nature requires, as to be evidently the Effect of something Corrupt in us, this Temperance abhors, and having declar'd it a Usurpation, she resolves upon bringing it under a better Regulation.

We are subject to another great Excess in our Words, being very often influenc'd in these by Vanity, Anger and Ambition; very often by Jealousie, Envy and Partiality; very often by Flattery, Rash Judgment and Moroseness; very often by Impatience, Contempt and Indiscretion; very often by Sensuality, Prophaneness and Irreligion; finally, there is not any one Weakness, Passion, or ill Affection in us, but it stands often at the Wheel, and turns the Tongue answerably to the disorder'd Motions of the Heart or Judgment. All these Temperance observes, and knowing them to be the Effect of Corruption, and therefore to be contrary to those Rules of the Gospel, whichevery Christian has undertaken, and is oblig'd to follow; therefore she sets her Guard upon the Tongue, and gives it Directions, *First, When to Speak, and when to keep Silence. 2dly, To Whom to speak, and Where, 3dly, How much to speak, and in what manner. 4thly, To what End to speak;* and by these Rules endeavors to bring the Tongue into a due Subjection to Reason and Faith, which being the Guides, by which we are to be directed both as Men and Christians, can be the only

only Means, by which we can preserve Innocence, and prevent the Guilt of those infinit Sins, to which our Corruption leads us.

Temperance goes yet farther, and inspects even the Motions of the Soul, in which we are likewise subject to great Excess. It considers the Understanding; for tho' Knowledge be a commendable quality, and, under good Regulation, affords great Light to Salvation, yet it has its failings; sometimes in Rashness, in pretending a clear sight of what it sees nothing but the Shadow; in absolutely pronouncing upon its own Presumption; and being positive in maintaining its false Steps, rather than own Mistakes: Sometimes in Pride, by over-rating its own Private Notions, and undervaluing all such, as dissent from them. Sometimes in Curiosity, by enquiring into such things, as are either Unprofitable or Hurtful; and by pretending to take off the Veil from such Mysteries, which God is pleas'd to hide from us, and in which he demands our Faith, and not our Understanding. Sometimes in Blindness, by being cover'd with such Mist rais'd from Passion, Interest or Education, as not to see the

the most obvious Truths, and to proceed contrary to the very Principles of Common Reason. Sometimes by Weakness, in the ill Application of Good Principles, and by mistaking the Vapors rais'd from Fears and Melancholy, for the Rays and Light of the most Solid Reason; and thus often bringing Light it self into the Darkeness of Dispute and Doubt. Many other Failings and Weaknesses there are, to which our Understanding is Subject; and this being our General Guide in all Concerns both of this Life and the next, Temperance is here upon the strictest Watch, as knowing, that a Mistake here, is many times, as Poyson in a Fountain, which diffuses it self into all its Streams, and does Mischief where-ever it goes. Upon this Motive Temperance stands Concern'd, putting in Cautions against its Rashness, demanding a review of what seems ready for a Positive Sentence; abating its Pride by the Remembrance of past Oversight; giving a Check to many of its Enquiries, bringing its Principles and Motives to a better Examination; and often questioning its Credulity upon insufficient Evidence. Thus it endeavors to prevent all the Mischiefs
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of Pride, Positiveness, Curiosity, Blindness, Passion, Credulity, Weakness, and whatever other Distempers there are of our Understanding. And if this Care be not allow'd and encourag'd, that, which ought to be our Light, will so often lead us out of the Way, that we shall be expos'd to infinit Miscarriages both in regard of this Life, and that which is to come.

Again, Temperance calls the Will to an account, and seeing, how perversely Blind it is in its Inclinations, Desires, Affections, Passions, and runs at all, that pleases, without any Consideration of the Poyson, that lyes hid, or the Mischiefs of thus gratifying it self: Hence it is often restrain'd, and by Severe Checks is stop't in the midst of its most violent Desires; all its Motions are brought to the Test of God's Will, and no farther allow'd, than this will give leave; nay, 'tis often confin'd within stricter Bounds, so to bring it under better Government, and by the Exercise of Self-denials to strengthen both its Expectations and Desires, and make it more Easie in yielding, when 'tis Necessary it should yield. In the same manner is a Watch set up on the Imagination, so that as often as

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it begins by Hurtful Suppositions, Idle Amusements, Chimerical Arguments, Vain Entertainments, to soften, exasperate, dissipate or deject the Mind, it is presently recall'd, reproach'd with its Folly, and by being turn'd to better Objects, is made serviceable to better Ends.

Thus Temperance is a General Means, and absolutely Necessary for coming to that State of Mind, which makes both the Happiness and Greatness of a Christian in this Life. Those, who make use of it, as they ought, are in the Way to all, that is substantially Good and Great, and 'tis not in the Power of Misfortune, to deprive them of the Honor of this Character. Those, who use it not, and have no regard to its directions, in the Language of the Gospel, can never be Wise or Great: Tho' they have both Wit and Learning, these cannot rescue them from the Ignominy of Fools; tho' they have all the Advantages of Riches, Beauty, Honor, and their most admir'd Satisfaction, yet they are nothing better than Slaves, and there is real Misery and Baseness under all this Pageantry, such as is at present the Hatred of Hea-

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ven, and if not reform'd, will bring them to be the Eternal Scorn of Devils.

O God of Mercy, look with Compassion on all, who profess a Faith in thee: Give them all a Sense of their Duty; open their Eyes to see and know those Means, which alone are capable of bringing them to the Happiness of being Christians in Life as well as Name; and let them not confine their Desires to a Happiness, that is False and Perishing, when thou hast prepar'd for them that which is Solid and Eternal.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

THose, who see the Necessity of Temperance, for coming up to the Rules of a Christian Life, must see likewise, that Prudence is as Necessary as Temperance, and that they are both so link'd together, that one cannot be without the other. The Prudence here desir'd, is that, of which all are capable: It is not the Privilege of Wit or Learning; it has no dependance on Riches or Honor; it is not confin'd to Climate; but equally lyes open to Persons of all Estates
and

and Conditions; to the Poor, as to the Rich; to the Servant, as to the Master; to the Lame, Sick and Blind, as to the Healthy; to those that cannot Read, as to the greatest Scholars. And this is one Effect of God's Infinite Mercy to Man, that as all, without any respect of Persons, are call'd to Salvation, so the Means of Salvation are common to all Conditions, and all are capable of them.

What is this Prudence? It is to seek God, and so to Manage all things belonging to Human Life, as to make them serviceable for the Possession of him. 'Tis Prudence then to consider God Infinite in Majesty and Goodness, and our selves Infinite in Misery: This was the Wisdom S. *Augustin* pray'd for; *Noverim te, noverim me: Let me know thee, O Lord, and let me know my self.* It is Prudence seriously to consider what is Best, and resolutely to embrace it; and what is Worst, and with Zeal to detest it. It is Prudence to consider, what will be the End of the Just and the Unjust; the Comfort of being eternally United to God, and the Despair of being for ever Separated from him. It is Prudence, carefully to avoid all that, which can eternally Divide from God,

to God, and likewise whatever can delay the Possession of Him. Finally, it is Prudence, to Love and Practice all those things, which are capable of drawing us nearer to God, and of engaging his Goodness to our Assistance.

Hence it is the Office of Prudence to be in Commission with Temperance, to order the Thoughts and Heart towards God; the Affections, that they be not immoderately engag'd with Creatures; the Will and Desires, that they be not alienated from God; the Intention, that it be not mixt with Earth; the Judgment, that it be not corrupted; the Words and Actions, that they be not defil'd with what is Sinful; but that the Whole Man be so order'd, that God may be sought in all things, and a nearer approach daily made to that Last End, for which Man was Created.

Hence it has a Particular Concern in time of Plenty, Peace, and all kinds of Prosperity, to be Watchful against all Abuses; that these Temporal Blessings be not made the Support and Encrease of Vanity, Idleness, Prodigality and Extravagance, but that an Advantage be made of them all, to the greater Honor of God, and Benefit of the Soul. For this end Prudence Deliberates

rates, how these may be turn'd to the best account; and upon the Consideration, that all that Money is Lost to Eternity, which is laid out to Complement a Vain, Ambitious Humor, or an Extravagant World; that all that Time is Lost to Eternity, which is given to Unnecessary Sleep, Idleness, and Dangerous Entertainments; she resolves upon a better Method, and that is, so to Manage all the Gifts of God, that they be to the Honor of the Giver, and not wasted in Folly. Hence bringing all Expences as near to Necessity, as Discretion will allow, she is not Solicitous to Heap up immense Portions for Children, by which Charity is disabled; but leaving these with a Decent Provision, she looks out for the Poor, the Comfortless and Distress'd; she gives Bread to the Hungry, Liberty to the Prisoner, Relief to the Sick; she Disposes of Orphans, and takes Care of those, whose Years, Sex, and other Circumstances expose them most to Danger. She considers the Demands of Piety, and where there appears an encouraging Prospect of Spiritual Good, there puts forth her helping Hand. She likewise orders the Distribution of Time, allows to Sleep, what is enough for Nature,

Nature, but not Sloth; allows for Dressing, what is enough for Decency, but not for Pride, nor even to deprive the Soul of that Retirement, which her Wants require. She makes and admits such Visits, as a Christian Correspondence requires, but generally gives to these no more than the Remnants of Time, dividing the Business of the Day betwixt the Duties of the Soul and Family, and yet still permitting Charity to Interrupt or Dispencc with this Order.

A like Concern has Prudence so to manage all Misfortunes of Life, that they may be as serviceable to Eternity, as the most desirable Conveniencies of Health, Plenty and Peace. Hence whether Misfortune be Transitory, or Fixt, she first Labors to moderate, and by degrees, to suppress all Inclinations to Impatience, Fretfulness, Disquiet, Murmuring, and Complaints; she gives a Check to Fears, and the Rovings of Melancholy and a disturb'd Imagination; because she knows there is nothing more Pernicious than Favor and Indulgence to these interior Disorders. Then considering the great Advantages, that may be made of whatever it be, that afflicts, she strongly perswades the
Soul

Soul into this Method; raising the Heart with Hope, and Confidence in God; bending it with Submission to his Appointments; exercising it in Prayer and Patience; teaching it to make a Sacrifice of all its Oppression, for the Attonement of past Offences, and the Obtaining of future Happiness; shewing it the Vanity and Uncertainty of all Earthly Comforts, and leading it to the Desire of Unchangable Rest.

In this manner Prudence manages both Extremes, and all other Circumstances of Human Life, having only this one study, how to make such a Christian use of the Present Condition, as to render it Advantageous towards the gaining a better Life. And in this Imitates the Wise Merchant, who contrives to make the best Market of his Goods, and is Solicitous, that none perish on his Hands, or go off at an under Rate. For since there is no Circumstance of Life, whether in good or bad Fortune, but what may serve in the Purchase of Eternal Happiness, it must be vile Ill-husbandry, such as is not Consistent with Prudence, to let it be lost for want of Care, to throw it away upon Smoke and Butter-flies,

or

or so to abuse it, as to make it the Purchase of Everlasting Chains and Slavery.

And yet is not this the Common Method of Trading in the World, where little Care is us'd, for turning the Blessings either of Plenty or Afflictions to the best account; where there is little Solicitude for gaining Heaven by them; but the Outside of what is propos'd, is either to gain Money or Honor, to buy fine Feathers, to appear in State, to live in Idleness, or purchase such Satisfaction, which have nothing lasting, but the Misery, that attends them? Where Afflictions are as much abus'd, and instead of being Sanctified by an Humble Patience for the Price of Heaven, are attended with so much Injustice, Intemperance, Impatience, Murmuring, Cursing and Despair, that a Person in Affliction is made the Resemblance of Hell, and nothing but that unchangeable State can add to the Misery.

Thus wholly unacquainted with Prudence are the great part of the Christian World; they know what it is to be Wise and Industrious in seeking that, which perishes, in obtaining what is to satisfy their present Corruption; in this they know how to Contrive,

Contrive, to Solicit, to Labor, to Watch, to Suffer, to Conceal their Repentments, to Stifle their Passions, nothing of Subtilty or Art is wanting to Accomplish their Designs. But as for the better part, which is that of securing Eternity, how little pains do they take to know any thing of it, and how much less in doing any thing for it? In this the Wisest of the World are Fools, and the most Industrious are without Life. For since we are Born to enter into an Eternal State, and our Being here can be for no more than a few Years; what must it be esteem'd, but unaccountable Madness, to be Solicitous, and Labor for the Convenience of a few Moments, and leave Eternity to the Hazard, or, which is worse, to make their Eternity certainly Miserable, for the Satisfaction of a Life, that perishes under the very Enjoyment? And yet what else is it, the Wise of the World do? Nay, what else is it, that makes the great Business of the World? Observe all the Noise, Hurry and Solitude of Men; examin all their Contrivances and Cabals; see what Spring it is, that Moves them, in all they undertake; what raises them in the Morning, what moves them in the Day; what

what breaks their Rest at Night; and you'll find there is seldom any Proposal beyond Money, Interest, or the Satisfaction of some Natural Passion, without the least Consideration of Eternity; but too often in such a Way, as they know to be Inconsistent with the Well-being of it. So that the true Emblem of the World and its Wisdom, is not full in the Ants, who are busie all Day in carrying of Straws; but we must go to *Bedlam* in Romance, where Men are working hard all Day for making their own Chains, and with Musick and Dancing carrying Wood for a Fire, which, they know, is to burn them.

This is the Wisdom of all those Unhappy Ones, whose whole Concern is confin'd to the present Life. Deliver me, O God, from this Blindness, and have Compassion on all those, who are thus Miserable; may they see their present Folly, and by thy Grace be convinc'd, that there is no true Wisdom but in seeking Thee.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

HAVING propos'd this Principle, last Sunday, that there is no true Wisdom, but in seeking God, the Iniquity of the Christian World will not give me leave to change the Subject; but I must press it yet again, to see, if the Repetition of it will make any Impression, so as to oblige the Professors of the Gospel to change their Method, or, at least, to own their Folly.

For this end I here demand of them; whether the Principles of common Reason do not oblige those, who have it, to propose some End in what they do, and to act so conformably to that End, as to use proper Means for obtaining it? *2dly*, Whether the Gospel does not teach as many as believe it, that the End, for which Man is Born into this World, be not for gaining Life Eternal? Reason answers positively in the Affirmative to the First of these Queries, and both Reason and Faith to the Second. This being then suppos'd as undeniable, I demand again; whether there can be any degree of True Wisdom, in acting either contrary to Reason

Reason and Faith, or so as to have no regard to them? Here can be no Place for doubt in the Answer to this Question; since the Wisdom of Rational Creatures is to act conformably to the Principles of Reason; and the Wisdom of Christians is to act conformably to the Principles of Reason inform'd by Faith.

If this may be suppos'd, then let us bring the common Method of Christians to this Test. Are Pride, Ambition, Prodigality or Extravagance, a Proper Means for gaining Eternal Life? Is it a Life of Idleness, Intemperance or Luxury, proper for coming to the End, for which Man was created? Is the Love of Money or Applause, a Help to Heaven? Is Injustice, Frauds or Over-reaching, any of the Expedients for obtaining future Happiness? All these are Mark'd by the Gospel, as Evils, which God detests, and consequently are so far from being any Advantage in the Way to Eternal Life, that they leave a guilt upon the Soul, and hinder it from having any part in that Possession. Is it so? Then what are you doing, who, thro' the course of your Lives, are under the conduct of these Evils, and are generally led a-

long by them? Who have Pride to cloath you, Ambition or Interest to direct you in the great Affairs of Life; Idleness to find you leisure Hours; Intemperance and Luxury to spend them; who have Frauds and Injustice to draw in Money, and either Covetousness to hoard it, or Prodigality to scatter it in the Service of every Idle Humor? Can you pretend, that in this way you are Mindful of the End for which you were Born, and carefully making towards it? No, 'tis evident, there is nothing of this in the general Management of your Lives; what you do, is expressly contrary to the End of your Creation, it is that, which will make it impossible for you ever to come to that Happiness. What then is to be concluded, but since there is no Wisdom, but in acting conformably to the Principles of Reason and Faith, that you have no Christian Wisdom in you, who believing the End for which you were Born, to be the Possession of God, have not your Lives directed to that End?

And you, who, tho' not in these Extrems, yet live almost unmindful of God, who rise to your Work, or to Play, who Eat, Drink and Sleep, and thro'

thro' the course of the Day, have your Thoughts wholly busied in Worldly Solicitude, or Worldly Folly; who study nothing, but how to gain, how to advance or please your selves; who, in a lower degree, have a Mixture of as many Follies of Pride, Envy, Prodigality, Idleness, Self-love and Intemperance, as the others above, and run over such a Form only of Prayer, as may be enough to convince you, that you yet believe in God; you, I say, what are you doing? Can you think, such a Life as yours, is seeking God? Can you pretend, that you are using proper Means for gaining that End of possessing God, for which you were Born? Observe but the Method of your Days, and then tell me; whether you can in earnest think this to be the Way to Heaven? If you have any Value left for Truth, you must own, that you have seldom any Thoughts of God, or of Heaven, that you are led along every Day, either by Sloth, Vanity, Idleness or Interest, just as if you were Infidels; and if there be any Morality, is it any other, than of the Philosophers; such as Humor, Pride, or Regard to the World exacts? Where then is your Wisdom, whilst knowing

the End of your Creation, you seek it not? This is not acting conformably to the Principles of Reason and Faith, and therefore cannot be Christian VVisdom.

From the Application of this Rule, it is in every one's Power to see, how much or how little of their Lives is directed by the VVisdom of the Gospel; and they may with some Assurance conclude, that whether as to their Thoughts, VVords, Actions, Money, Time, Industry, Solitude or Business, as far as they have sought God by them, so far they have done wisely, according to the VVisdom of the Gospel. And hence they may see, *First*, That the Practice of VVisdom being the Ordering their Lives to God, those are the VVifest Christians, who are Industrious to direct all they do and all they suffer to God; who make every Circumstance of Life to be some Means of approaching to him; for this is living according to the Principles of Reason and Faith, and making towards the End, for which they had a Being, and all other Blessings given them. This is coming nearest to the VVisdom of God, in directing, with him, all Creatures to his Glory, and making them serviceable

to the End of their Creation, and therefore being the Participation of the Divine VVisdom, is most becoming Christians, who by their Profession are to live by his Spirit.

2dly, They may see the Truth of that Position; that to be truly VVise, is not the Priviledge only of the Learned, Rich, or of Men of good natural Abilities; but is common to the Poor, the Unlearned, and the most Miserable of the VVorld; because nothing more is requir'd to be truly VVise, but to believe in God, and to seek him; and this the Poor, Unlearned and Miserable are as capable of doing, as any others; since God may be as truly sought and honor'd in the Evils these suffer, as in any Blessings which others enjoy.

3dly, They may see, that 'tis not a Christian part, to deride or despise any for their Misery, for their Deformity of Body, Ungenteel Behaviour, Meanness of Natural Parts, or for any Public Disgrace or Oppression; because if Persons under these Temporal Disadvantages, bear with Patience the Abjection caus'd by them, and offer an humble Sacrifice of all they suffer to God, in the Adoration of his Holy VVill; if those of Mean Capacity seek

God with Sincerity, according to the Talents he has given them; they may have much the Preference to those, who undervalue and expose them to Scorn; he that serves may be better than he that commands; there may be more Value under Rags, than Tissue; he that runs by the Coach, may be Greater, than he that rides in State, and he that is under the Executioner's Hand, Happier than he who pronounc'd Sentence of Death upon him. For that a Good use of Misfortune is True VVisdom, and this gives a real Value to the Possessors; while Earthly Advantages without this have nothing in them, but Superficial.

4thly, They may see, that to renounce the VVorld, with all its Greatness, in exchange for better Circumstances for the Service of God, is the greatest VVisdom; because this is not only to seek God, but to offer all, both Life and Time to his Service, and make choice of such Conveniencies, where there is less danger of Dissipation.

5thly, That there is no True VVisdom in the strictest Recluse, or in any others, who live in the Practice of the most Religious Exercises of Fasting, Prayer and Alms; if the general Design

sign be only to gain the Reputation of Saint; or if all be done with that Neglect and Indifferency, as is wholly unworthy of him, whom they pretend to serve; for that this is not seeking God, nor making towards the End of their Creation, and consequently can have no VVisdom in it. VVhat then becomes of all Prayer, and other Exercises, which are not carefully perform'd? God is Spirit and Truth, and those, who do not thus adore him, are not to be number'd among the VVile.

Lastly, That it is in the Power of all Persons, that live in the VVorld, of whatever Condition they be, to be truly VVile, by seeking God in all they do, and in all they suffer: that the more they do for engaging God's Mercy to them, the VViler they are! And tho' the Religious State have many great Advantages; yet that People in the World, by good Management of their much worse Circumstances, may be Eminent in True Wisdom, and in the Rewards of it.

But this VVisdom is thy Gift, O God; be so Merciful then to grant it to all, according to their VVants. The Rich want it for the right Administration of the Blessings they enjoy; the

Poor and Afflicted, for making a good use of their Misfortunes: all others want it in their different Stations: Grant it, O God, to all according to their Wants.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

THose, who have consider'd what has been said of Temperance and Prudence, will find, that neither of these can be expected or practis'd without great Patience, and therefore that Patience is absolutely Necessary in a Christian Life. Hence the VVise Man says, *Qui Patient est, multa gubernatur Prudentia; qui autem Impatiens est, cito aliam stultitiam sumit.* He that is Patient, is govern'd with great Prudence; and he that is Impatient, shews his Folly: And in these VVords declares, that no Wisdom can be expected, where there is not Patience; and that remarkable Folly is the Fruit of Impatience. The Reason is obvious enough; because Impatience disorders the Mind, and renders it incapable of VVeighing or Consulting; and what then can be the Effect but Rashness? Patience therefore is Necessary.

But

But what is this Patience? It is a Firmness of Mind in peaceably bearing whatever Evils come to our Lot. It not only stands with Peace under the Scourge or Trials, which come from the Hand of God; but likewise under whatever Difficulties we meet in the Practice of Virtue, whether arising from our own Infirmary, or from the Malice of the Devil, or the Opposition of the World. It not only stands with Peace under such Corrections, Reproofs or Evils, which we draw upon our selves, thro' any Offence, Fault or Indiscretion of our own; but even under all such, as undeservedly fall upon us, when we are wholly Innocent, and without Fault. And tho' there be a particular Difficulty in supporting such Injuries or Evils, to which we have given no Provocation, but are wholly blameless as to the Occasion of them; yet still these may and ought to be suffer'd with more Satisfaction, than when we have our Conscience to reproach us with any guilt, by which we have deserv'd them; because there is a Comfort in Innocence, which Moderates, and even Sweetens the greatest Evils, and the Promise of Particular Blessings, which ever adds to this Comfort. To this purpose

purpose is the Advice of S. Peter: Let none of you suffer as a Murtherer, or Thief, or Railer, or a Coveter of other Mens Goods; but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorifie God in this Name, 1 Pet. 4. 15. For it is better, if the Will of God be so, that you suffer for Well-doing, than doing Ill, 3. 17. For this is acceptable to God, if a Man for Conscience towards God, be Afflicted, Suffering wrongfully. For what Glory is it, if offending you are punish'd, and take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable to God. For so this age you call'd; because Christ also suffer'd for us, leaving you an Example, that you follow his Steps, 2. 19.

Again, Patience preserves Peace of Mind, not only, when the Provocation comes from such, whom we esteem, love, or depend on; but likewise when from others, whom we dislike, and who have nothing in them, which either Moderates or Awes our Passion. Lastly, It keeps all in Peace, not only, when Injuries are offer'd, or Persecution comes from Wicked or Indiscreet Persons; but also, when from such as are Good, and our Friends; and this, when we have done no Ill to deserve or provoke it.

In this manner Patience stands sted-
dily under all kinds of Evils ; its only
Business being to bear peaceably the
weight, that is laid upon it, without con-
sidering any one Circumstance, of From
Whom, or Upon what Occasion, or
What Provocation, or any other, that
can raise any Uneasiness : It considers
all that can Moderate, Sweeten, and
give Strength, and nothing that is like-
ly to Exasperate : And whenever dis-
quieting Thoughts occur (as very of-
ten they do, and even pressing with
great Violence) the only Concern is,
not to look at, or give any Attention
to them ; but to cast them off with the
same Violence, as they come ; regard-
ing them, as the Effect of the Devil's
Envy, who, under the Cover of making
Apologies, and a Reasonable Defence,
designs to deprive the Soul of the Me-
rit of its Suffering, and disturb it with
Noise, Anger and Confusion. In the
Management of these Thoughts is the
great Art of Patience ; for if the least
Favor be shewn them ; if the Mind be
permitted to Work upon them ; if At-
tention be given to the usual Remon-
strances, to the Pleading and Reas'nings,
which are press'd with the evidence of
Demonstration from Infinite Topics,
these

these never fail of raising so much Heat and Storm, that the difficulty of the first Provocation is doubl'd, and more than ordinary Strength is necessary for overcoming it now improv'd by the Subtilty of Passion and Ingenious Indiscretion. For this Reason discreet Patience stands ever ready to suppress these Thoughts, and whatever Reasons appear, concludes it can be never Reasonable to encrease its own Difficulties, and add to the Weight of its Burthen, which already it can scarce stand under without danger of Sinking.

As Patience is careful to Check the first Thoughts of Passion, so likewise to govern the Tongue; so that whatever the Inclination be to Complain or Murmur, it absolutely forbids all Communication of the present Uneasiness, especially to such Persons, as are likely by their Indiscretion or Flattery, to join with the Passion already mov'd, and shew the unreasonableness of the Provocation. In this Patience is rigorously Cautious; because it is sensible, that most Persons, tho' Friends, are in this Point, either so Weak or Imprudent, as to affect the Knavery of Huncius Lawyers, who are for Magnifying the Justice of an ill Cause, and study how

how to widen the Breach, instead of compoling it; and this being nothing less than blowing up the Fire, which is already of it self too Fierce, Patience sees it quite opposit to the Interest of its Cause, and therefore lays a strict Injunction against it.

What it desires, as most Perfect, is to conceal all the Uneasiness it feels, and to seek no Comfort from the Compassion of Men; but to leave its Cause wholly to God, and wait, till he shall please to appear in it, either by sending Relief, or manifesting its Innocence. This is most conformable to the Example of Christ, who being Falsly Accus'd before Pilate, stood Silent, without answering one Word to the Charge, and therefore it must be the best Copy, which is taken from such an Original. But if Patience be yet too Weak to come up to this, there can be no farther Indulgence granted, than to lay open the Sore to such a Friend, whose Prudent Charity will, by all manner of Lenitives, mollifie the Sharp and Corroding Humors, and thus prepare it for a Cure; who will inspire Courage, and Strength for supporting the Pain, and be never so False, as to discover the Weakness of the Patient to any, much

less to those, who will either deride or take offence at his Complaints.

But the Favor of this Allowance must not be abus'd; by making the Aggrievance the common Subject of their entertaining Discourse; for this is not Consistent either with Patience or Prudence; from both which those depart much farther, who to the Complaints of their Trouble add warm Expressions of their Resentments, and mix these with Bitterness, Contempt or Aversion. And what if they cannot see the Person, who has injur'd them, without betraying in their Looks and Words the Poyson of the Heart, and therefore forbear all usual Expressions even of a Heathen Civility? Nothing of this can be reconcil'd with Patience; whilst this is not bearing Troubles with Peace and Firmness of Mind, but yielding under the Disorder, and shewing the Weakness of Passion. This is not Suffering Injuries, but being mov'd and exasperated by them, and following the Suggestions of a disturb'd Mind. This is complying with Impatience, and giving it the Rule, instead of suppressing it, as Duty requires. And 'tis as little agreeable to Prudence; because a Man is never more likely to
commit

commit Indiscretions, than when Impatience raising undue Heats within, draws up such thick Vapors, as bring Reason under a Cloud, and hinder it from discerning or making a true Judgment of any thing before it. Patience therefore being so very Necessary, that without it a Christian cannot live peaceably either with God or Man, I could wish all of this Profession would seriously consider this Necessity, and convinc'd by the Sense of their own Interest, take true Pains in advancing in it; the Advantage would fully recompence the Labor of gaining it, and the Fruit of Peace would encourage them still to go on.

O God, thou know'st this Necessity, and how little sensible we are of it; help us, we beseech thee, in this Point, and it will be a help in many, whilst all that belongs to Salvation depends on this; for we know, that without Patience we cannot possess our Souls. See then our Misery, and have Compassion; teach us to bear with all Evils, except that of Sin; teach us to have Patience under present Evils, that we may escape those, which are Eternal.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

THere can be no Patience, but with a Contradiction to Nature, which is ever inclin'd to Vexation, Fretting, Anger and Revenge; and tho' the great Interest we have in preserving our inward Peace, be a strong Motive for preventing these ill Effects; yet such is our Weakness, that we stand in need of some better Helps, such as Faith affords us, for securing that peaceable Temper, which belongs to the Professors of the Gospel of Christ; and what these Helps are, we will now consider.

The First is the Example of Jesus Christ, who Suffering many and great Injuries, False Accusations and Torments for our sakes, has by this merited at our Hands, that with answerable Love we be grateful to him, and by bearing but a short time our Cross with Patience, we show our selves conformable to his Life and Actions, as much as in us lies. This is the great Encouragement to Patience made use of by the Apostles to the Faithful of their time, and to us in them. Hear

S. Paul;

Eleventh Sunday, &c. 211

S. Paul ; Let us run with Patience the Race, that is set before us ; looking upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy set before him, endur'd the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set at the right Hand of his Father. Consider therefore him, who endur'd such Contradiction from Sinners against himself, that you be not tir'd, and faint in your Minds ; for you have not yet resisted unto Blood, striving against Sin, Heb. 12. 1. Hear it again from S. Peter ; who requires Christians to suffer with Patience ; because Christ suffer'd for us, leaving you an Example, that you follow his Steps, who committed no Sin, neither was deceit found in his Mouth ; who when he was revil'd, revil'd not again ; when he suffer'd, threaten'd not, but committed himself to him, who judges according to Justice ; who did bear our Sins in his Body upon the Cross, that we, being Dead to Sin, might Live to Justice ; by whose Stripes we have been heal'd, 1 Pet. 2. 21. Upon the same Head are we invited to Patience in other Epistles of the New Testament ; and having here the Example of all kinds of Suffering, both in Reputation, Liberty and Life, both from Friends and Enemies, both from Misfortune, Blindness and Malice ; and these falling upon a Spotless Lamb, whose
only

only Crime was Innocence and Charity to Man; we have in this, all that can give Life to Patience; and while we have made choice of him for our Master and our Guide, we can except against no sort of Trials; for where can the Exception be, when we cannot be true to our Profession, if we are not ever in readiness of giving our Blood?

A Second Help is from the Consideration of those Promises, God has made to such as suffer with Patience; the whole Scripture is full of them, but especially the New Testament, which pronounces repeated Blessings, and even Eternal Rest in the Possession of God, to those that suffer Tribulations with Patience, and that the present Sorrow shall be turn'd into Joy. Now God being Faithful to his Promises, and infinitely Just in satisfying whatever Engagements his Goodness has made, this ought to raise up the Spirit of Christians under the Severest Afflictions; for the Prospect of Relief being a General Comfort to all, that are in Trouble, and the Consideration of a Reward being that, which sweetens Labors, and gives Courage amidst Dangers. How much Reason have Christians to be comforted in all they suffer, and

and to persevere with Courage; when they have the Assurance from Infal-
 ble Truth, that their Troubles shall not
 last; that they shall have Relief; that
 unspeakable Joys shall succeed their
 Sorrows, and that God himself will be
 the Reward of their Labors? It was the
 Faith of these Promises work'd so
 strongly upon S. Paul, that he found
 the Effects of them in the midst of his
 Trials, so as even in Tribulation to o-
 verflow with Joy. The like Effect they
 had in the Martyrs of Christ, who, like
 the Apostles, rejoic'd, that they were
 thought worthy to suffer, and carried
 this Joy thro' all their Torments.
 Hence St. Chrysost. declares it a greater
*Favor of Heaven to suffer for Christ, than
 to raise the Dead and work Miracles; be-
 cause there, says he, I am the Debtor;*
hic vero Christus est a Debtor to me. Pro
Christo pati munus est majoris admirationis,
quam sit revera mortuos excitare, & signa
miranda patrare; nam illis quidem debi-
tor sum, hic vero Debitorem habeo Christum.
 Rom. 14. in ep. ad Phil. And I think
 we have all so great an Interest in Hea-
 ven, and so many Hazards in coming
 to it, that whatever can be a Help to
 us, ought to be esteem'd not so much
 our Trouble, as our Joy; and what
 then

then must it be, where we have God's Word for our Encouragement, his Goodness to Promise, and his Justice to Fulfil the Promises? Where can our Faith be, if this be no Comfort? When we are on a Journey of Concern, is it not a Comfort to have Assurance of being in the right Way? And tho' there be Trouble in a Storm; is there not Comfort too, when by it we make better Way to our Port? Afflictions are the Way to Heaven, and if a Storm, yet such as, with Patience, carries us most securely forward in our Way.

A Third Help is in considering the more Immediate Effects design'd by Almighty God in all Afflictions, proper for advancing us towards the Last End of Happiness: As *First*, In permitting here many Troubles, that by them we may be convinc'd of the Vanity of all Earthly Comforts, and from this sensible Knowledge may learn to raise our Hearts to the desire of a better Life; and to seek such Comforts, as cannot fail. Those, who observe how much Earthly Enjoyments divert the Heart from Heaven, and what Difficulties those have in leaving the World; who admire it, will easily find the Blessing of a great Mercy in all those Trou-
bles

bles and Losses, by which we are taught to despise it. The World must be left, and is it not a Mercy then, to find so little Comfort in it, as not only to be willing, but even to desire to leave it? This Mercy, O God, I earnestly desire, and let it come whatever way thou know'st most expedient for me.

2dly, By permitting Afflictions, that by them we may obtain that true Wisdom of knowing not only the World, but our Selves, our Weakness, our Sins, and our Dependance on God. How many had never known God, had not Vexation given them Understanding, as it was in *Nabuchodonosor*? How many that know God, had never known their Sins, had not Affliction brought them to the Sense of them, as in the Children of *Israel*, *Joseph's* Brethren, and the Prodigal Son? And now every Day, how does every Trial help to open our Eyes, and show us, how much we want of Patience, how much of Humility, how much of the true Spirit of Christ; and by discovering our Wants, inform us of the Necessity of seeking Help from him, who is the Only Helper in the time of Distress?

3dly, By giving us an Opportunity of making

making Sin-offerings of all our Afflictions; it being most certain, that if we submit to the Difficulties of Life, as to the Scourge, with which God punishes our Sins; this Acknowledgment of our Unworthiness and God's Justice, proceeding from a Contrite Heart, is a most Effectual Means of turning God's Anger from us, and obtaining, not only Pardon of our Sins, but likewise a discharge from all the Punishment due to them.

Lastly, By teaching us to submit to the Will of God: It is in this One Point is Center'd the Practice of a Christian Life; so that God can never be far from them, who make the Will of God the Rule of their Life, without having regard to the Inclinations of their own. And where is this better taught, than in time of Suffering, when a Person being carried contrary to his own Will, thus comes to be convinced, that there is another Will, which governs; that this Will being All-powerful, there is a Necessity of Submitting to it; that, it being All-wise, it is best for him to Submit to it; that, it being Infinitely Good and Just, there can be no Exceptions against it; that all his Good both here and hereafter depending

depending wholly upon it, he cannot possibly expect any true Comfort or Blessing, but by an entire Submission to it. Hence is he effectually taught to bow down to God, to confess all his Appointments to be Just, to adore this Justice even when it Strikes, and to own, that nothing can be better, than that the Will of God be done in him.

By these and other like Motives may Christians prevail upon their Inclinations, so as to give a Check to their Passions, and there suffer with Patience, where all seems prepar'd to break forth into a Storm. Happy they, who are Masters of this Christian Art; and happy those too, who are every Day taking Pains to learn it. The Blessings attending and following it are worth all the Labor; and tho' it should prove Seven Years Work, yet will it be more to the Purpose, than whatever else is learn'd by such an Apprenticeship. It is the Priviledge of Patience to make Martyrs even in the Peace of the Church. *Habet & Pax Ecclesiae Martyres suos.* And what is this, but the next Step to a Crown? But it is thou, O Jesus, must be the Author of this Grace, who hast taught it by thy Example, and art pleas'd thy self to be the Re-
 K compence

compence of it. Strengthen therefore, we beseech thee, us thy Servants; help us by Patience here to possess our Souls, and by Patience carry us on thro' all Trials, till we come to the Possession of thee.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

TH^O what has been already said of Patience, be sufficient to make this Judgment; that Impatience is not agreeable to the Principles of the Gospel; yet considering, how general a failing this is, if I add something more in particular, I hope it will not be enough to move that Passion, which I purpose to lay; and if it does, this will justify my Undertaking, and shew I had reason to speak to Impatience. On this Subject I must take notice of several degrees.

As, *First*, Of that Impatience, which breaks forth into a Storm of Swearing, Cursing, Oaths, and Imprecations. Those Christians, who are subject to this ill Custom, have reason to take pains in Reforming it; since they cannot but know, if they know any thing, that it is not according to the Spirit of

the Gospel ; that it is contrary to the Gospel ; that it is a Violation of Charity, a Scandal to the Weak, Ill Example to the Unwary, a Prophanation of God's Holy Name, and taking part even with the Devil, in bringing Heaven, and all that is Sacred, into Contempt ; and therefore, that it can no more be tolerated, where Christ is profess'd, than the Worship of Baal or Dagon upon the Altar of the Living God. For Youth therefore to learn this Custom, is to learn to renounce their Baptism ; for Men to live in the tolerated Practice of it, is to live Confederate with Hell ; and for those, who upon Custom only, and without any Design, thus prophanely express their Impatience, they are under the same Guilt with the former, if they are not industriously Solicitous to disengage themselves from that Evil, to which they are yet Slaves of Custom. And tho' it must be allow'd, that there is difficulty in overcoming such a Custom ; yet it must be own'd too, that it may be overcome ; and where it is not, the only Reason must be, because there is not a due Solitude upon the Soul ; it is not sufficiently Watchful, just Pains are not us'd for gaining the Victory. And

hence their Plea is not to be allow'd as Good, who pretend, they would do it, if they could; for this is no more, than an Excuse for Sloth, and the Argument of those, who as yet are not truly in Earnest.

2dly, There is another Impatience of those, who, tho' forbearing all Scandalous Expressions, yet easily break forth into Passion, upon ordinary Provocations; who cannot bear either Reproof from Superiors, or Contradiction from Equals, nor see any thing done disagreeable to their Order, Way or Humor, but presently all is in Disorder, Heats arise within, Pride swells the Breast, then Clouds appear, and a Storm falls upon the next, that come in the way. All this is far from the Spirit of the Gospel, which prescribes Meekness and Moderation in all such Cases, and does not allow of Anger, even when there is just Occasion for it, but in such a way, as to be without Sin; the Anger therefore of a Christian is not to be the Anger of Pride or Passion; and when these begin to swell, his first Business is to correct himself, and not think of reprovng others faults, till he can do it without a greater fault of his own. Passion is never a good Minister

ster of Justice, and therefore, till he has gain'd Peace within, he ought not to think himself qualified for giving Reproof. This may be thought losing Time, and giving Opportunity for the growth of Disorders; but the Justice and better Success of a Calmer Reproof, will abundantly recompence all such delay. In all other Provocations, Impatience is as little warrantable, for that it is generally Unjust, both in the Constructions and Judgments it makes, and in its own Resentments; and always carrying the Soul out of the ways of Humility and Submission, deprives it of all the Advantage design'd in the better use of its Troubles. Then as to the Injury it does by its unreasonable Heats, this is known only to God; for that 'tis seldom seen by us, how much of Uneasiness, Solitude, Dejection and Discouragement it causes in others; and 'tis as little known, what are the ill Effects of these Disquiets, both upon Soul and Body. But however there is that Justice in this Evil, that it punishes those, who do this Mischief to others; since Mind and Body suffer from its Corroding Humors, and their Reputation, whether of Piety, Courage or Discretion, cannot be great,

who are subject to this Weakness. But, besides many others, a considerable Mischief is, in imposing silence on their Best Friends, in such Occasions, where it might be much for their Good to have them speak. I mean, when their Circumstances require the Charity of a Friend to advise them, or put them in mind of such Oversights, as they observe not in themselves. For here, while Friends see them of an impatient and jealous Humor, such as makes an ill use of Good Advice; how often are these discourag'd from their Pious Designs, and omit the Part both of Friendship and Charity, upon the apprehension of doing Mischief by it, thro' their Indisposition, who cannot bear it? This I set down with a particular Remark, as having often seen the Experience of it; wherefore I cannot but recommend it in general to all, That, upon receiving Advice or Hint of Miscarriage from any Friend, they would be Moderate, without discovering either Anger, or Dislike, or Melancholy, or Jealousie; for that the Symptoms of such an ill Temper may discourage all like Attempts for the future, and be the occasion of leaving them to the Effects of their own Oversights

sights or Indiscretion. I confess, it ought not to be so; but so weak is the Charity of most, and such a mixture of Self-love there is with the best Friendship, that there's but too much reason to apprehend, that silence will be the Effect of abus'd Charity.

3dly, There is another Impatience, which instead of speaking too much, speaks too little; and this is the Effect sometimes of Melancholy, sometimes of a Sullen Pride, and both ways is to be reprov'd as Unchristian. *First*, For the great Injury it does those, who thus nourish Poyson in their own Breast, such as causes a universal Disorder in the Soul, and hinders it from the quiet Performance of all Spiritual Duties; and then works into so many unjust Reasonings, rash Censures, and groundless Jealousies, that 'tis a question, whether Charity be not lost with their Peace. *2dly*, For the Injury done to others, since a discontented silence is taken by those, who think themselves concern'd, as a form'd Anger, and proves sufficient Occasion for a Thousand Imaginary Discontents, and Uncharitable Reasonings; when many times there is nothing more than Mistakes on both sides, such as by a Mo-

derate and Peaceable Conference might have been prevented, upon the first appearance of the Misunderstanding. Wherefore I must set this down not only as Impatience, but as Indiscretion too, since it has so much ill Management in it.

4^{thly}, There is another Impatience, in presently shewing Resentments, upon any word let fall by Company, as if it were a Reflection, or design'd Affront upon them; and hence engaging in Uncharitable Disputes, and improving a Jest or light Word into Contention. This Impatience is mixt with Jealousie, and very often with Indiscretion, and upon all accounts is reprovable. A little Patience with some Management, is to be the Remedy: It being no matter of Difficulty to pass by a Reflection, either as not understood, or not level'd at them, or even to turn it by with a Jest, such as discovers neither Guilt or Concern. And what is this, but to prescribe either Silence or a Smile? And is it not great Imprudence to receive a Wound, when so little is requir'd for putting by the Stroke?

5^{thly}, There is another Impatience, in being often Peevish and Fretful, and
so

to speak to others, as if there was always a Wasp upon the Tongue. I will own, this may be no more than Ill Custom, or the Effect of Indisposition or Temper, and therefore may deserve from others both Compassion and Patience: But I must say too, that it is not Edifying, and therefore cannot but recommend to all, who profess Religion and Piety, that they would be Watchful against it; especially those, who have any degree of Superiority; for that to be so often Snapping and Biting gives ill Example, and are qualities, which suit not with the Sweetness and Mildness of the Christian Temper. We love it not in others; why should we bear it in our selves?

Lastly, There is an Impatience in regard of our selves, in not bearing the Trouble of our own Infirmities, Imperfections, Relapses, the Difficulties of Amendment, or Darkeness of our State. Piety and Good Desires are generally at the bottom of this, but they are very ill manag'd; since next to Wilful Sin, there is nothing more Prejudicial to the Service of God, than this Impatience; whilst it unqualifies all for making a true Judgment of themselves, involves them in endless Troubles, and

indisposes for all that is Spiritual. The Remedy of this must be Patience, Meekness of Spirit, and following the Advice of a Good Director; these, by degrees, will bring Comfort and Patience with them; and such as will not be persuaded to make use of them, have not yet learn'd by their Suffering, to be Wise.

These are some Particulars of Impatience, some worse than others, and yet all bad enough. I wish all the Professors of the Gospel would seriously look upon them with all the ill Effects, that generally attend them; they would certainly see so much disagreeable to the Life of Christ, as to give them a Dislike, and draw Confusion from the daily Practice of what renders them so unlike their Master. O God, encrease this their Confusion, till by daily Labor they Work their Souls into a better Disposition, and by Patience show, whose Disciples they are.

*Thirteenth Sunday after
Pentecost*

BESIDES the Virtues hitherto menti-
on'd, there are still many other
Ingredients to make up the Good Chri-
stian: One of these is Constancy, which
is a Firmness of Mind, not only in
Suffering, but likewise in Doing whate-
ver God exacts from us; so as to go on
steddily with Duty, without being
diverted either by our own Sloth, Soli-
citude, Melancholy, or by the Flatte-
ries or Terrors of the World. This
short Description of Constancy shews
Christians, how much in earnest they
ought to be in what they have underta-
ken; and that to Profess the Name of
Christ and his Gospel, to join in a
Form of Religion, to make a Shew of
Holiness, either in Habit, or Words, or
any outward Ceremonies, is nothing to
the purpose, if the Heart be not so tru-
ly possess'd with God, and the Love of
him, as to be Sincere in seeking him,
and in earnest in whatever his Holy
Will demands from them.

This must be the Interior Disposi-
tion of every Christian, that desires to

be

be sav'd ; and the Foundation of it must be in the Sincerity of their Faith : Whence they are not to Content themselves with a hasty Repetition of their Creed, and a Superficial Profession of their Believing it, as likewise of whatever the Gospel teaches ; for all this may be no more, than the Effect of Education or Custom, and as speaking a Language they have been bred up to from their Childhood ; but if they think of Living Christians, they must weigh the import of the Words, and consider, whether the Faith, of what they profess with their Lips, be really and truly in their Hearts. They must consider, whether they have an assured Faith of God, and an Eternity to come ; that Happiness will be the Recompence of the Just, and Hell the Punishment of the Wicked ; that Heaven is worth all their Labor ; that if they Miscarry, they are of all Creatures the most Miserable ; that they must certainly Miscarry, if they love and seek this World, and not God ; if they live in a Sinful State, and either despise all the Means of Repentance, or are so Insincere in the use of them, as seldom to go beyond the Ceremonial Part ? If the Heart be possess'd with a real

real Faith of these Particulars, and other Branches belonging to them, this Faith will be the best Foundation for that Constancy, which must carry Christians thro' all the Difficulties of Life, and thro' the Necessary Trials of Virtue; this Faith will especially establish them against the Dangers of Sin; it will oblige them to be in earnest in the use of such Remedies, as God has appointed for the Pardon of Sin; and it will make them cheerfully pursue those Ways, which withdraw the Soul from the World, and lead it nearer to God: And whoever can but come to a Constancy of Mind in these Points, needs not question, but he has all that, which is Necessary for a Future State.

The First Part of Constancy is against the Dangers of Sin; this belongs to every Christian, because all live in this danger; and if there be not such a Firmness of Soul, as to keep it steady against all the Solicitations of whatever Pleases, and the Apprehensions of all that Terrifies, there can be no Security against the worst of Evils. Now a Sincere Faith is the best Help to this; for when a Soul has this Principle well settled in it, that its Only Good is the Possession of God; and its Only Real Misfortune

Misfortune is to be eternally Separated from him, this will help us to despise the most powerful Charms of the World, and likewise all, that is frightful in it. For when a short Recollection has moderated the Violence of the first Impressions, and given us Opportunity of taking the true Measures of things from this Principle thus fixt in the Heart, here presently the Soul begins to raise it self, and, by the Light of Faith, settles these Conclusions; that the most pleasing Objects, which flatter Sense and Inclination, but in the Enjoyment evidently hazard its Separation from God, can have nothing truly Desirable, or truly Valuable in them: That whatever Evils are Terrible to Nature, but by a Patient Submission, are the most assur'd Means, for coming to the Possession of God, have nothing of real unhappiness in them, but are more to be coveted than fear'd. These Conclusions being fixt above Dispute or Doubt, here the Soul makes a true Judgment both of its natural Desires and Fears; that they are both equally the Effect of a corrupt Nature, and both alike to be despis'd, that, to regard and be directed by these, is in Fact to renounce

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its Faith, and not to act as Christian, but as an Unbeliever; and therefore, that it cannot possibly be in earnest in what it professes to believe, if it does not renounce these, and act according to what it believes.

Thus Faith is the Root of a Christian Life, and Constancy is the Fruit, that grows upon it; for when the Soul is thus possess'd, it stands firm, as upon a Rock, against all Assaults. For tho' there be still something inviting to Nature in Riches, in Honor, in the Esteem of the World, in its Satisfaction and Pleasures; yet how little a Way can this Invitation go, when it sees its Eternal Good either wholly Lost, or very much Hazarded by them? This Consideration quite changes the Property of them; so that what to Nature seems Desirable, to Faith appears Contemptible. Hence the Faithful Soul passes by all Worldly Solicitations, or with Resolution, rejects them; finding more of horror than attractive, in all that, which pleases for a Moment, but leads to Eternal Death; and wonders, how Men, who say they have Reason and Faith, can admire those, as real Goods, and embrace them with Joy, which they believe must soon be follow'd with their Everlasting Confusion.

in standing against the Force of Corruption, in overcoming a rebellious Nature, and a perverse World, and in separating from the Occasions of Sin, yet Constancy built on a firm Faith carries him thro' these Difficulties ; because he knows, that Sin separates from God ; that Repentance is the only Remedy of Sin, and that there can be no Repentance, where there are not due Endeavors us'd for overcoming and forsaking Sin.

The same Help the good Christian has in all the Ways, that lead nearer to God ; for when he reflects, that he was created for the Possession of God, there is no true Satisfaction, but in advancing towards that End. He sees 'tis Nonsense to profess Christianity, and not to live so in the Practice of its Rules, as to have just hopes of coming to the End of Religion : He sees 'tis Childrens-play to pretend to Salvation, and not to do, what is Necessary for obtaining it. Hence having a Knowledge of his Duties, and of the Means of Salvation, he makes it his Business not only to perform them, as to the Ceremony, but in such a manner, that they may be helpful towards his last End. Thus he endeavors to Pray, thus to

Fast

Fast, thus to follow the Directions of the Gospel, in first seeking the Kingdom of God and its Justice. And as to all the Difficulties, that appear, he always says; Heaven is worth all my Labor; where is my Faith, if I give up the Cause of Heaven, for the Difficulties of gaining it? Where is my Reason, if professing to seek God, and knowing this to be my only Interest, I let Trifles quite put me out of the Way, and expose my Soul to endless Misery, for fear of making Flesh uneasie for a Moment? Thus he goes on with Constancy; and may this, O God, be the Method of thy Servants; let it be the Effect of a lively Faith to establish them against the Dangers of Sin; to be in earnest in the Means of recovering from its Guilt, and in overcoming all the Difficulties, which meet them in the Way of Salvation. Such a Constancy may bring them to a Crown; but without it, who can give them Hopes?

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Last Sunday's Discourse might be an excuse for making here any Addition

tion concerning Inconstancy; but this being a general Unhappiness, which is the Disappointment of so many Good Purposes and Religious Designs, it can be no Disservice to Christianity to speak more directly of it.

What the Mischiefs of Inconstancy are, is too evident in the Lives of most Christians; whilst where ever there is a Faith of a Life to come, and yet not due Care us'd in providing for it, Inconstancy has still a share in the Miscarriage. It is true, some are so Lost to all that is Good, that the Despair of Amendment puts by the Thoughts of Attempting it; but, as to the far greater Number, they not only think, but likewise purpose and resolve upon a Change; but of all these, how few are they, who carry on their Purposes so far, as to Accomplish what they design? Let every one consider themselves, and see, if they are not one. And why is it? Do we not know our Duty? Are we not sensible what our Sins are? Do we not foresee the ill Consequence of them? Do we not conclude of the Necessity of our Amendment; and not only resolve upon it, but likewise frequently undertake it? And why is it not effected; but after so many Proposals

posals and Attempts, the Work is still
undone, and we are yet what we were?
Is not the general Reason of this, be-
cause we have not Steadiness enough
to go on with what we undertake;
and for want of Constancy leave our
Work unfinish'd? Here is our great
Misfortune; we are subject to a kind
of Lightness and Uncertainty in all the
Faculties of our Soul, tho' some much
more than others; a little serious Consi-
deration lays before us the Unhappiness
of a Sinful State, convinces us of our in-
tolerable Neglects; and how often is
it, that from what we read and hear,
we seem so sensibly mov'd, as if now
nothing could possibly happen to pre-
vent or even delay our Amendment? So
far the Weakest go; and where there are
but the least Seeds of Piety, how often,
upon such lively Impressions, do these
shoot forth into Sighs and Tears?
And who now would not expect some
considerable Change from such encou-
raging Promises? And yet let but
some new Object occur; let there be
but a change of Place, of Company,
of Business, or Entertainment, and the
former Ideas are so soon weakn'd, if
not quite effaced, that now there ap-
pears nothing in the Soul, capable of
giving

giving a Check to those Inclinations, which were but so lately condemn'd at the Cause of its Unhappiness. This is our Condition, and so truly Miserable it is in Persons, who are hast'ning to Eternity, and can have no Prospect of Happiness, but upon an Effectual Change of their Lives, that we have Reason daily to Lament it, and to allow no Truce to our Grief, till it be follow'd with a settled Resolution, of making it our daily Business to become more serious in a Concern whereon our Eternity depends.

If this be not done, how Vain must our Hopes be; since upon looking well into them, they are no more, than a Sight of our Unhappiness, without Endeavors for putting our selves in a better State? And what will this avail us? What help can it be to us, if we discover the infinit Workings of our Pride, in admiring our selves, in seeking to be admir'd by others, and in the Contempt of those, who will not flatter us? What if we see our selves under the Violence of Sinful Passions, and by them frequently drawn into Sin? What if we observe our Souls engag'd in so much Worldly Solitude, as to attend little to the Work of our Salvation?

tion? What if we are convinc'd of a general Neglect of Eternity being our Fault; of being under the Government of Sloth, of the Love of Ease and Appetite; of Admiring all that is Vain; of being Earnest in all that is to Please our selves, and seldom Serious in what belongs to God? What help I say, can there be in making this Observation of our selves, if we let it be no more than the subject of a passing Sigh, and still keep on our Course? Can this sight of our Misery give us Hope of Mercy? If the Traveller sees a Precipice before him, and upon this expresses his Concern; if he stands a while, looks about him, considers which Way to avoid the Danger; and yet presently goes on again, will this Foresight of Danger prevent his Fall? If the Pilot discovers Rocks before him, is troubled at the sight, sees which Way to Steer with safety, and yet still holds on his Course, will this prevent his Shipwrack?

If this be no help in either Case, but the sight of the Danger Aggravates the Neglect with the Infamy of Folly and Madnes; what must it be in Circumstances of a much higher Concern; when Christians seeing their present Unhappiness, seeing Precipices and
Rocks

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Rocks before them, so that everlasting Death must be their Fate, if they go on, however keep on still their usual Course, and let the Interruption of few serious Thoughts serve for no more, than to be a future Evidence against themselves, that their Misery is not Misfortune, but their Choice? This is certainly the general Case of all, that live on in a State of Sin; for these cannot but acknowledge, they have a Sense of being in an ill Way; the Glimpse of Divine Light, which at times glances upon them, shews them the guilt of their Pride, and Ambition, of their Covetousness, Frauds, and Injustice, of their Prodigality, Sensuality, and Intemperance, of their Fondness of the World, Forgetfulness and Neglect of God, and Departing from the Ways of the Gospel. All this they own in the Confession of their Weakness, and in their Imperfect Repentance. But where is the Change? They go on still as before; and what is this, but to run on upon Rocks and Precipices, which they see before them? The Point then is clear, that their Misery is not to be placed to their want of Sense; but to a certain Lightness and Inconstancy of Mind, which makes them False to themselves,

themselves, and Unsteddy in a Matter, which requires the greatest Steddiness.

But if Inconstancy be the Occasion of Misery, how is it to be remedied? The Remedy must be the same, as in things, that are ever Moving or Floating; all Endeavors must be us'd to fix them; for till such Means be found out they will certainly Move and Float still. All things, that are light, cannot be expected to abide long in one Place, but will be carried about as the Wind Blows, and let Boats in what part of the River you please, if they are not fasten'd, they will be Born away with the Stream. It is the same with the Minds of Men; let them be turn'd towards God by Prayer; let them be touch'd with a Sense of their Sins; let them have a true Sight of their present Misery, and think of quitting it, this will signifie little, if they are not by due Means render'd stable and fixt, but with the next Wind that blows, or with the next Current they meet, they will again be carried away. Hence it is, that Prayers and Confessions are so little to the purpose in such great Number; they have their Minds as light as Straws, thro' that Vanity and Self-love, with which they are affected;

feeted; they have their Hearts as unsettled, as Boats adrift thro' the many Passions, to which they are subject; and they think of setting all right by some formal Prayers and Confessions of Custom; and suppose they do; what can this signifie, if still their Minds and Hearts are left under all their former lightness and unsettledness? This is no more than the settling Boats or Straw without Care to fix them; and how long can this last, but only till the next Wind, that blows, or the next Motion of the Water?

I say then, that Christians must make it their Business. *First*, To Remedy the Lightness and Inconstancy of their Minds, and then some Fruit may be expected of their other Pious Exercises, with just Hopes of being deliver'd from their Sins; but this Settlement can no otherwise be, than by fixing the Heart to something Immoveable, that is, to God; for till the Heart, which of it self is Light and Changeable, be link'd to that, which is Unchangeable, it must still be subject to the Effects of its own natural Weakness, and ever be expos'd to the uncertainty of Winds and Streams. This I know, is to prescribe a great and laborious

borious Work, even the Change of the Whole Man: But what Remedy? If Man be so disorder'd, that thro' a certain lightness of Mind, he is likely to finish nothing he undertakes for his Eternal Good, this lightness must be remov'd, or else he can have no other Prospect, of being Lost; and if the Remedy be hard, yet 'tis worth the Pains. To tell me therefore of Persons being daily at their Prayers, and often at the Sacraments, whose Hearts are as Vain, as the World can make them; and asking Pardon of their Sins, without Thoughts of remedying that Inconstancy of Mind, which is one Cause of all their Sins, is to tell me of Persons Laboring as much in Vain, as those, who complaining of Quicksilver being unmanageable, without taking any Care to fix it. The Mind therefore is to be fix'd, but by what Method this is to be effected, must be remitted to the following *Saturday*. In the mean time, let us all with Humility acknowledge, whatever degree we have of Inconstancy, by which we are so often put by our best Resolutions, and leave those Undertakings unfinished which are most for our Eternal Good; let us beg Pardon for the many times we have mock'd Heaven by our Insincere and Barren Purposes, and

now, with all the Earnestness of our Souls, Pray for Grace, to be establish'd against all such Weakness.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ON last *Sunday* was determin'd the Subject for this, and that is, to enquire by what Method is to be remedied that our usual Inconstancy of Mind, by which we are diverted from the Prosecution of the best Resolutions we make for our Eternal Good. The Case has been already determin'd in General; That if Inconstancy be our Disease, the Remedy must be, in rendering our Minds more fixt as to good. But how is this to be effected in particular? By taking away the Cause of our Distemper; for this is to make a Substantial Cure. Now in our Case the Cause is evidently above Dispute; That our Inconstancy proceeds from a Weakness of Mind, by which it is easily mov'd, by every thing that touches it, and therefore can never long be fixt on God. It is too easie in receiving Impressions from what is Earthly, and being always expos'd to such Objects, hence the Thoughts of Heaven can

can never long subsist, because they are presently thrust out by the next, that occurs, and hence the Soul is ever unsettled in what is good. Means therefore must be found to establish the Heart against the Impressions of Earthly Goods, and thus the Thoughts of Heaven will become more lasting.

The first Help for this must be, by taking some time every Day for seriously thinking of the Method of our Lives; it is want of considering is the occasion of our Lightness, and it is by serious Consideration we must begin to be more settled. The Points therefore to be consider'd are, *First*, Whether we in earnest desire to save our Souls? *2dly*, Whether we can reasonably hope for Salvation, if we use not the Means for obtaining it? *3dly*, Whether the love of the World, and spending our Lives in running after its Follies, Vanities and Satisfactions, be the Means prescrib'd for gaining Heaven? *4thly*, Whether indulging our Corruption, gratifying our Passions and perverse Inclinations, be a proper Means for Salvation? *5thly*, Whether making it our daily Business to please our selves in all our Natural Desires, and to become daily more and more Sensual and

Worldly, be the way to approach to God?

If these Points be daily and duly weigh'd, we cannot fail of being convinc'd, That nothing of all this can help us towards Heaven; that the more we favor our selves in these Points, the farther we are from all Hopes of Salvation; that the more we make these our Business, the more Pains we take to be Damn'd. And if we are convinc'd of this, must not then this become a settled Principle in our Soul; That all those things of the World, which court our Sences, our Inclinations, and our Passions, are the greatest Cheats; that they are the worst of Enemies; that they only Flatter us to Ruin us? If we can come thus far, will not this be some help, in not being so easily mov'd by them? For whatever their Invitation be; yet when we reflect, it is no more than the Invitation of Cheats, of Enemies, of Poyson, of Death, and Everlasting Misery; this must necessarily mix the Inclination with Fear and Horror, and be a daily restraint upon the Rational Soul, which cannot but blush at its Fondness of those things, which by pleasing Shadows draw into Eternal Flames.

When

When due Consideration has season'd the Soul with these Truths, then the Thoughts must of course advance to a farther Enquiry: As, *First*, Whether Christ being our Master and Example, we are not to learn the Way of Salvation from him. *2dly*, Whether he having taught us, to Deny our selves, to be Poor in Spirit, to be Humble and Meek, to be Patient, Charitable and Peaceable, not to Love the World, but to Watch and Pray, to Seek first the Kingdom of God, and strive to Enter by the Narrow Gate; we are not to judge this the proper Means for Saving our Souls? *3dly*, Whether we are not to make it our daily Business to live and walk according to his direction? *4thly*, Whether we can be in earnest in what we profess to believe of another Life, if we have peace with our selves, and yet are quite out of the way, which he teaches? *5thly*, Whether, this Life being so inconsiderable, in Comparison of Eternity, we are not to be more Solicitous for our future, than present good? *6thly*, Whether we are not to look upon all that, as our Unhappiness, which pleasing us for the present, puts us in hazard of being Eternally Miserable?

If the Mind be frequently brought to the Serious Consideration of these Points, it must, by degrees, come to such a true Sense of its Eternal Interest, as to be earnest in seeking it, to be afraid of every thing, that is contrary to it, and to have a true value for nothing, but only as it contributes to Eternity. And when once it comes to this Disposition, then how inconsiderable will the World, with all its Satisfaction and Greatness, appear to it? How will these lose their Power in raising Admiration and Desires? And where then can be the Danger of that Inconstancy, which has hitherto diverted it from the Prosecution of all Good; when now it has not that lightness, by which it was formerly subject to every blast, but stands more firm, by participating of the stability of those Goods, which it admires.

But if the Heart, thro' a long Habit of Self-love, proves obstinate against all such Considerations, and seems to receive no impressions from them, then some stronger Remedy ought to be applied. Then a Spiritual Retreat is necessary, where the Christian, for some Days, being separated from his usual Dissipations, may wholly apply his Thoughts

Thoughts to find out himself, and behold at leisure the unhappy State, in which he is ; and by the Prescriptions of a Skilful Hand, be put in a Method proper for his Recovery. This is a very powerful help, and so much both of Seriousness and Resolution is necessary, that the very undertaking it is half the Cure ; especially, when a most particular Assistance of Divine Grace may be expected, to their Endeavors, who thus give proof of being in earnest in their Desires of a better State.

Where Circumstances will not allow of this Expedient in all its strictness, Christians however are to come as near it, as they can : They must every Day have their Serious Hours ; they must have a time for Thinking, and making Reflection upon the Method, in which they live ; they must have a time for Reading such Books, as shall be judg'd most proper for them ; and again, time for Considering what they have read : Time again for Prayer, time for Repentance, and this not only in general, but with a particular review of their Disorders, and a serious deliberation of the Means, by which they may be effectually reform'd. Here must be consider'd, what it is in particular, that

most affects the Heart, and takes it off from seeking God, and making Provision for Eternity; and upon the discovery, a Resolution must be taken for retrenching all, whatever it be, that daily feeds and strengthens the Disorder; for if the Soul be under a Clog, or link'd with Chains, the Clog must be remov'd, and the Chains broken, that the Soul may be at liberty for seeking God; if this be not endeavour'd, there cannot possibly be any Seriousness in the Undertaking, but all is Delusion. And here there must be no regard to Inclination, Custom, Satisfaction, Company, or to any Considerations of Nature, or the World; for if in these be allow'd a Dispensing Power, there can be no hopes of Reforming, whilst these will never want Arguments to plead for all that, as necessary, which cannot be forsaken without violence to them. This is the Method, which the Gospel prescribes, and as some degree of Constancy in these Exercises is most likely to prove effectual for delivering the Soul from that lightness, which renders it unsettled in all that belongs to God; so those, who cannot perswade themselves to undertake it, are most likely to carry their Inconstancy with them to the

the Grave, and delay their Amendment, till there is no more place for it.

Now tho' it must be own'd, there is difficulty in the Practice of this Method, since it requires a general Self-denial, and most particularly in those things, which are Favorites to an indulg'd Inclination; yet this cannot be helpt; for if their Distemper cannot be remov'd, but by such ungrateful Remedies, their Misfortune is in the Disease, and not in the Cure. If they desire to go to Heaven, and find themselves very much out of the Way, they must take the pains necessary to recover their false Steps, or else they must never hope to see the right End of their Journey. And when all their Complaints of Difficulties are heard; pray, what is there more in the Prescription, than what they readily embrace, in any acute Disease? Does not this confine them? Does it not oblige them to break off the whole Course of all, that is pleasing to them, both as to Table, Company, Diversions and Interest? And if so much be willingly submitted to for Health; how can it be judg'd unreasonable, for recovering the Soul from Death, and putting it into the Way of Life Eternal?

Eternal? The unreasonableness there is not in the Remedy, but in Men; who being mortally Sick, would willingly be restor'd to Health without avoiding those things, which Nourish their Corruption in them. They know themselves under the Plague, and would be cur'd, even while they Breathe an infected Air. They know they Sow nothing but Tares, and yet would bring forth good Corn. They know their Souls lye open to all the designs of their Enemy, and while they seem to present their Misfortune, yet they will not set up any Fence against him. Now if this Unreasonableness were in trivial Matters, it were something tolerable; but as it is in the Concern of Eternity, it carries with it the reproach of Madness, and under this I must leave it; for they can deserve no better Character, who seeing themselves running into the Fire, seem concern'd, and yet go on still. O God, when wilt thou give a better Sense to thy People, such as may put them upon effectually remedying all their Weakness! They see enough to fright them, they know enough to secure them against their Fears; but they have no Steadiness to pursue what they know; and hence the

the Work of Eternity, tho' often thought upon, and sometimes undertaken, yet 'tis with, so much Sloth, so little Attention, and so many long Interruptions, such as oblige them still to begin again, that 'tis never likely to be finish'd. Remedy, O God, this Evil, and let not thy Servants lye under the deserv'd reproach of this unaccountable Folly.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

THose, who observe the general Inconstancy amongst Christians, as to all that belongs to their Eternal Good, must with Evidence conclude, there's a Necessity of greater Steadiness; and that this is not to be expected, except they can come to such a degree of Self-denial, as to stand Firm amidst those Solicitations, which now prevail upon them, and put them by the Execution of whatever they propose of good. For as too great an Indulgence of themselves, and too much Easiness in following whatever seems to please

please, is their Misfortune, so there
 can be no Remedy; but in so many de-
 grees of Self-denial, as is Necessary to
 cut off the Excess. They who have
 many to please, and those Nice ones
 too, who multiply their Desires accord-
 ing to the Solitude there is to please
 them, can never be long at Rest; but
 must be ever subject to the perpetual
 Restlessness of their Demands, who are
 most importune with those, who Hu-
 mor them most; this is the distracted
 Condition of those Christians, who
 give Attendance to Self-love and other
 Passions; they are so often call'd upon
 in their Service, that whatever they
 undertake of Good, must necessarily
 be subject to continual Interruptions,
 and so often quite laid by, as it Interferes
 with Self-love, which having the com-
 mand, is impatient of all that which
 makes it uneasie, and seems to have de-
 light against it. Here being the Rise
 of an Inconstancy, there can be no help,
 but in bringing Self-love and all Passions
 under Government; for when this is
 effected, the Soul is then at Liberty of
 carrying on whatever it proposes of
 good, and without danger of being di-
 versed by those Evils, which now can
 only Murmur, but have not Strength
 to Rebel.

Self-denial then must be the Expedient, by which all those, who are sensible of their Inconstancy, must come to a better Temper. For since all the Distraction of the Mind arises from the Importunity of the Passions, which are ever restless, and the more uneasie still, the more they are obey'd; there can be no rational Proposal of remedying this Evil, which gives the Disturbance, but by abating its Strength, and restoring Reason and Faith to their Right of commanding, so as not to be subject to the Usurpation of Self-love, nor defeated in their Proposals of Virtue by the Violence of Passion.

The Consideration of the Distemper shews the Necessity of this Method; for since all our Inclinations are deprav'd by Sin, they are as so many Weights upon the Soul, which bend it always downward; they are as so many deceitful Guides, ever carrying it out of the Way; they are as so many false Lights, always putting it upon wandering. Now tho' every Object, to which they invite, be not always Sinful, but many times such as is Necessary, as in Eating, Drinking, Sleeping, &c. many times such as are Innocent, as in regard of Divertisements, Business,

ness, Company, Friends, Children, &c. yet even in these and all other like Cases, our Inclinations are so unhappy, that they ever run to Excess, so that what is Innocent, and even Necessary in the Moderation, in which it is Allow'd, with a little Indulgence, soon becomes Sinful in the Abuse. And here is still the much greater Unhappiness, as has been already Hinted, that the more we favor our Inclinations in any Excess, the farther they run into Excess; and not only so, but they ever gain Strength by being favor'd; so that, what at first was no more than Inclination, at length becomes a kind of Violence. And cannot be withstood, but with another Violence. And here is still another Addition of Unhappiness; that, as our Inclinations grow in Strength, so in proportion, our Reason and Faith, which should command them, become more Languishing and Weak; so that, when absolute Violence is Necessary to suppress them, there is still less Strength, to stand against them. In these Circumstances, tho' the Sense of Duty, is not so Lost, but that many Attempts may be made for recovering what is Lost; yet while the Passions are thus Vigorous, it is generally

ly with so little success, that it seems no more than the inconsiderable Galleries of a broken Army, which serve for nothing, but to discover their Weakness.

Now this being the Case of all Mankind, what must those Christians do, who think in earnest of being Steddy in the Practice of a Virtuous Life? The Point is clear: Either they must resolve upon denying their Inclinations, or else give up their Cause as lost. If they think of approaching to God, they must resist all that, which divides them at a greater Distance from them; they must not join with the *Philistines*, if they desire the *Israelites* should overcome. The Cause of Virtue is contrary to all our Inclinations of Nature: for whilst these lead into all that is Sinful, Virtue leads to God; And are Inclinations then to be favored or resisted? The Gospel leaves nothing to be disputed in this Case. The Rule there is general; *If any one will come after me, says Christ, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me, Mat. 16. 24.* We are to deny our selves, if we desire to be Christ's Disciples; the Condition is fixt, and must be observ'd. Hence the Apostle requires all to put off the *Old Man*, with his Acts, and put on the *New*:

New : This must be ; for while we find all that is within us bending towards Evil, and that all Indulgence encreases our Corruption, we can no otherwise Hope to have Christ form'd in us, or be in a Capacity of following him, than by subduing and breaking the Force of all that in us, which is contrary to him.

This must be effected by denying our selves, that is, by doing what God requires of us, without any regard to our own Will, whether it be pleas'd or displeas'd ; for this is to act with reference only to God's Will, and independent of our own ; and as this acknowledges all Power and Holiness in God, and gives him the Homage, that is due, to it, in Fact, declares our own Will to be Perverse and Blind, and brings it under the Contempt, of no regard being due to it, in whatever it Desires or Dislikes. This is a degree of Self-denial, which all ought to pretend to, and be Industrious in gaining it ; for how can Virtue be Solid, or Christ be truly Form'd in any Soul, where Private Inclination is in Power, and God's Will has not the Command?

But however this degree of Self-denial, which brings our own Will under a ge-

general Contempt, is not to be expected, but as the Effect of long and repeated Endeavors. For as our Inclinations become not Violent, but by a long Indulgence and frequent Yielding to them; so they can never be brought into due Subjection, but by a long Practice of Denying them. And when we have advanc'd as far as our present State will admit, yet still our Victory is never such, as to be secure of it; for that our Inclinations, like a Conquer'd People, will make Attempts for recovering their Liberty, and will not fail to take all Advantages, that shall be given them by the Negligence or Secure Confidence of their Conquerors.

If this be our Condition, then certainly no Christians can be in earnest in what they profess, who do not daily Labor to make their Inclinations subject to what Duty, that is, the Will of God, prescribes; and this both in doing what he commands, and avoiding whatever he forbids, tho' Inclination be equally averse to both. Let therefore Nature express its uneasiness, and struggle as it will, yet still they are to pursue the Way, in which Duty leads them; and if this Disciplin be observ'd,
Custom

Custom will, by degrees, make the Practice easie, and teach Nature to obey. This is the Way of the Gospel, the Way that leads to Virtue and to Life Eternal; and as in this Way all those have walk'd, whom we admire and honor as now Happy in the State of Bliss; so it is the Neglect of this Disciplin, which opens the Way to all the Vice, we see in the World; Nature is first favor'd in its Inclinations; the Custom of yielding to them, gives them Strength; this Strength is encreas'd, till they become Violent and Ungovernable; and then what is the whole Life, but an Obedience to their demands? This is the Life of the Proud and Ambitious, of the Unjust and Covetous, of the Idle and Intemperate, of the Prodigal, Sensual and Prophane: Their Desires are Imperious, and they themselves are nothing better than Slaves; they have set up a Tyrannic Power, and by this they are not now led, but driven: If the Light of Grace touches them, if the Charity of Friends calls upon them, if Disgrace, Poverty or Distempers give them a Sense of their Misery, they may express, it may be, their Resentments, and make some faint Promises of disengaging themselves;

selves ; but the habit of Vice soon returns with that Force upon them, and the difficulty of Liberty appears so great, that they again lye down under their Chains. Here's the Effect of yielding to Inclinations, which ought to have been kept in Subjection ; and if these unhappy Souls, who are now Suffering in an unchangeable State of Misery, were askt, how they came into that Place of Torments? They will all with one Voice answer ; the Neglect of denying our selves, has made us thus Wretched. O God, and is not this a strange Blindness of rational Creatures, that while we know this, we are yet so forward in indulging, and so difficult in denying our selves, when on this one Point our Eternal Lot so much depends ! Let thy Grace, we beseech thee, keep us in better Disciplin. And since thou hast taught us, O Jesus, that we must deny our selves, to follow thee, grant that according to this Method, we may become thy true Disciples.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

THE Condition of our Nature being such, that we cannot reasonably hope for the least degree of Virtue, but what is to be obtain'd and preserv'd by the Denial of our selves; it is now to be consider'd, when and in what Particulars we are to Deny our selves, that we may be so far Christ's Disciples, as to have just Hopes of receiving the Reward of his Disciples.

A Disciple of Christ is one, that follows Christ, and joins with him in his most serious Endeavors for doing the Will of God in all his Commandments, both as to what he enjoins and what he forbids.

Now it being the Will of God, *First*, That we should firmly Believe what Christ has Taught, this Faith is the first thing Necessary for a Disciple of Christ. To believe therefore in this manner is not a thing left to our Choice; but we are absolutely oblig'd to it in Compliance with the Will of God. Hence having found by his Grace, where this Faith is taught with the

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Security, which he himself has promis'd, we are bound to receive it, with an absolute Assent of our Judgment to it, as to the Truths propos'd to us by God; that is, without Hesitation or Doubt; and consequently we are under the same Obligation of Denying our selves, in all the Workings of our Phancy, Imagination and Reason, which any Ways seem to except against or question the Truths so taught and deliver'd. If they are Mysteious and Dark to us; if they are Incomprehensible, and above our reach; if they seem disagreeable to natural Experience and the Principles of common Reason; if Objections occur, that seem to strike at the very Foundation; yet Faith is to stand firm, and all these Suggestions are to be either despis'd or resisted, where Nature, by its Curiosity or Presumption, invades the Rights of God, and chooses rather to Rebel, than bear the Humiliation so uneasie to its Pride, of Believing without Seeing. Here is the first Self-denial, of our Reason and Judgment, when they are unwilling to submit to the Ordinance of God.

It being the Will of God, that we should keep his Commandments, we are oblig'd to Deny our selves

selves in all those Inclinations, which lead us to the violation of his Commands; because to break the Commandments of God is Sin, is Disobedience and Rebellion; and therefore all the Disciples of Christ, are under a Necessity of Denying themselves, in whatever inclines them to what is to absolutely unworthy of their Profession. If therefore Interest, Preferment and Honor invite, if Flesh and Blood be strongly solicited, if Company and Friends importune, if Liberty and Life plead; if thus, by all the most prevailing Arguments, our Inclinations be rais'd and quicken'd, yet all such Inclinations must be denied, if any one Condition of the Proposal be contrary to the Law of God. Because the Christian is to Love God above all things, and therefore no Inclination can be favor'd, which is contrary to this Love.

It being the Will of God, not only that we should avoid Sin, but likewise put on our Lord Jesus Christ, and be led by his Spirit; all the Followers of Christ are oblig'd, by Prudent Self denials, to keep all those Inclinations under Government, which are not agreeable to the Spirit of Christ and his Gospel. Upon this Principle,

it becomes their Obligation to observe with a strict Eye all their natural Inclinations; and not only to have a Horror of what is evidently Sinful, but likewise to be Jealous of all those Ways, which tho' approv'd by the World, are not conformable to the Example or Doctrin of Christ. And here, how many Self-denials come in upon them? Sloth and Idleness are not agreeable to the Example or Doctrin of Christ; therefore there must be a daily Self-denial in such Inclinations. Vanity, Pride and Ambition, are not agreeable to the Example or Doctrin of Christ; therefore there must be a daily Self-denial in such Inclinations. Courting the World, gratifying the Senses and Appetite, is not agreeable to the Example or Doctrin of Christ; therefore there must be a daily Self-denial in such Inclinations. The Love of Money, Unprofitable Expences, Immoderate Solitude in Worldly Affairs, are not agreeable to the Example or Doctrin of Christ; therefore there must be a daily Self-denial in such Inclinations. All the Suggestions of a Passionate or Uncharitable Disposition; all the Contrivances of Self-love; all the Methods of a Disorderly and Undisciplin'd Life; all the

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Entertainments, that dissipate the Soul, fill it with Amusements of what is Vain, and bring it by degrees into a forgetfulness of God; all the Ways, by which unwary Souls are drawn in to Love Drinking, Gaming, and an Unprofitable Life, are not agreeable to the Example or Doctrine of Christ; therefore there must be a daily Self-denial in such Inclinations. The same Lesson must be repeated of all the Aversions and Dislikes of the Soul, in regard of what is Good, and prescrib'd by Christ. An Unwillingness to Pray, to Read, to Fast, to Deny our selves, to go to the Sacraments: An Unwillingness to observe Disciplin, to Employment, to rise, when it is Time to go home at due Time; a Dislike of the Ways of Humility, of Meekness of Peace; a Dislike of what is Serious and Profitable, and especially of the Admonitions, whose Charity is ever ready to put us in Mind of our Faults; a Dislike of Persons, especially of those whose Zeal, Piety, or any other Advantages, we apprehend to be a reproach to us; a Dislike of Moderation and Temperance, with Infinite others which are the unhappy Effects of Corruption, are not agreeable to the

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Example or Doctrine of Christ; and therefore there must be a daily Self-denial in such Inclinations.

Besides these, there are still many other Particulars, in which Christians are bound to Self-denial, by Reason of the particular Obligations of their State. The more remarkable Persons are in their Station, the stricter guard they are bound to keep upon themselves, that so they may not give Offence to little ones, but edifie by their good Example. If their Guard must be strict, their Restraint must be the greater, and consequently Nature must be subject to more frequent Denials. Upon this Principle Church men are particularly oblig'd to Deny themselves in Liberties, that others take without Reproof, both as to their Actions, Discourse, Behaviour, Recreations, Habit, Employment, and the whole Discipline of Life; so likewise are all Superiors, Magistrates, and Heads of Families: Those too of an inferior Degree, as Children, Servants, &c. are not exempt; because their Subjection tying them up within certain Bounds, obliges them to Deny themselves in all those Inclinations, which are not a-

greeable to their Commands and Pleasure, whom they are bound to obey.

Besides these, there are Infinite other Self-denials prescribed by Prudence, and are the Obligation of all Conditions. These take Place in all Discourses and Actions, and the whole Management of Life; in which it is not enough to consider, what is in it self Innocent and Lawful; but present Circumstances must be weigh'd of Place, Persons and Time, whether it be now expedient; and all those Inclinations must be denied, which will not stand this Test. Those, who have observ'd the pernicious Effects of Indiscretion, in the M-timing of things, and in Speaking unseasonably without regard, not only to Persons, but even to Humors, must see the Necessity of these Self-denials, and that the most Fundamental Duties of Christianity, especially of Charity and Peace, stand expos'd, where there is not this Care.

From these Heads it appears, that Self-denial is so Necessary in a Christian Life, that there is not one Faculty in Soul or Body, which must not be subject to it, from the Understanding to the Meanest of our Senses. And hence some, who, thro' an excess of Self-love,
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are their own Idols, fail not to throw a Scandal upon our Profession, that if this be the Practice of the Gospel, then Christianity is a perpetual Slavery, 'tis living under an endless Contradiction, and a heavier Yoke than Nature is able to bear. This Character may be allow'd from Self-love, which suffers under Christianity, and judges it a Tyranny. But as for those, who believe the Gospel, these know, there is no reproach in all this: These know, 'tis as much the Duty of a Christian to Deny himself, as for a Soldier to Fight against his Enemies, that he undertook this, when at the Font, he made a Solemn Protestation to Renounce the Devil, his Works, and his Poms: That he cannot follow Christ, and live by his Spirit, except he Deny himself; that Christ and his Apostles are his Examples in this Exercise; that he has no other Way for overcoming that Corruption, to which he is subject, but by Self-denial; that he can have no Hopes of a happy Eternity, but by the Victory over Sin, which is not to be gain'd, without Self-denial. Now if Self-love calls this a Slavery, where the whole Undertaking is for the Cause of Reason and Faith, to put the Com-

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mand into their Hands, whose Rights it is, and to suppress Usurpers and Rebels: Is not this a more honorable Engagement, and more pleasing, where a good Conscience comforts, and the Prospect of a Crown encourages; than to be in the Service of Unreasonable, Infidel or Brutish Passions, such as flatter, indeed every Corrupt Humor, and please Man in what is Brutish in him, but engage him, in such Ways, as are Consistent neither with Honor, Reputation, Health, Estate, Reason, Faith or Salvation? The Point needs not long Consideration; for certainly they, who are under the Conduct of their Passions, are insensibly drawn into so many Unreasonable, Foolish, Base and Infamous Actions, that they discover their State to be the worst of Slaveries, in having their Eyes put out, and making present Infamy and future Misery their Choice. May I never, O God, submit to this Slavery, but rather live under a perpetual Contradiction to Nature, than seek to please Corruption with Violence to Reason and Faith.

Eigh-

Eighteenth Sunday, after Pen-
tecost.

IN last Sunday's Discourse was shewn the Necessity of Self-denial, and that the Practice of it is the Means, by which Christians are to obtain and advance in that Life, which the Gospel requires. But because this Practice cannot be expected, but where there is a Foundation laid of a solid Humility, therefore we must now speak of this Virtue, and see, how far it may contribute to this good Effect.

Justice can never be duly administer'd, but with regard to Desert and Demerit. But when these are duly consider'd, then there is a good direction for Reward or Punishment; then it appears, how far 'tis reasonable to Discouragement or Encourage, to give Denials, or grant Requests, to strengthen the Reins, or give greater Liberty. If this be a good Rule for doing Justice to others, it is certainly so in regard of our selves. We ought, *First*, To make Inquest; and know our selves, before we can with Justice decree Rewards or Punishments; neither can the Practice be reasonable

of being Indulgent to our selves, except it be first enquir'd; what is the use we make of Favors, and whether we are the better for them?

If this be the Method of Justice, then to be Just to our selves; we must first enquire; what our Deserts are? And here upon a very short Examination, this Evidence is given in and attested above dispute: *First*, That of our selves we are nothing, and therefore can of our selves deserve nothing. *2^{dly}*, That by Sin we are many degrees than nothing, having unworthily provok'd our God by our Iniquities, and being a miserable Clay, have rebelliously lifted up our Heads against him. *3^{dly}*, That we have not only done this; but this is even now our daily Practice; there being not one Day, wherein we offend not against our God.

2^{dly}, We must enquire; what is the Use we make of Favors? And here Affidavit is made beyond Exception; that we generally grow worse for Favors; that we abuse all the Blessings of God; that the more he heaps upon us, the more unmindful we live of him, and the greater Offences we commit against him; so that the encrease of Benefits is generally the encrease of Sin.

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Upon this Information fully made out, what must be the Sentence? If Justice sits upon the Bench, can it decree Rewards to such Offenders? Can it give Encouragement to such detestable Ingratitude? This would be nothing less, than to take part with Criminals, to abett their Wickedness; and therefore not Consistent with Justice: The only thing therefore it has to do, is to lay their Crimes home to them; so to give them a true Sense of their Iniquities; and then to Doom them to such Penalties, as may be some Satisfaction to the World of their Repentance, a Punishment of past Crimes, and a Discouragement from ever returning to them again. Thus Justice must proceed.

Let then every Christian set up a Court of Justice within his own Breast, and according to this Form, Sum up the Evidence, and Pronounce Sentence against himself: Thou art sensible, that thou art nothing, nothing of thy self, but Misery and Weakness; hence thou art certainly in thy self Contemptible; therefore I adjudge thee to have a Mean Opinion of thy self, and always to esteem thy self worthy of Contempt. 2dly, I adjudge thee never to

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prefer thy self before others; because Being Miserable and Contemprible, there can be nothing in thee, which thou canst call thy own, upon which thou canst deserve any Preference. Hence if thou observest any Advantage in thy self, or hast done any thing Commendable, I enjoin thee to be ever mindful, that this is not thy own, but the pure Mercy of God in thee; and therefore that thou never Value thy self on this account, but give Praise and Thanks to his Goodness, whose Gift it is, and who is so Merciful to thee, who deserves it not.

Again, thy own Conscience is Evidence against thee, that Miserable and Wretched as thou art, thou hast yet Infinit Times been Stubborn and Rebellious against thy God; thou hast committed many Iniquities, despis'd his Blessings, and ungratefully turn'd them to his own greater Displeasure. Wherefore I adjudge thee to receive all Troubles and Afflictions with Patience, as being much less than what thy Iniquities deserves. *1dly*, Never to speak Advantageously of thy self. *3dly*, Never to think thy self Affronted, upon others speaking contemptibly of thee. *4thly*, Never to cover thy Imperfections

perfections with vain Pretexts and Excuses, but to be content that thy Weaknesses be known. *5thly*, To be satisfied in whatever Accident happens, either of Oversight or Indiscretion, which causes Abjection in thee, and is likely to lessen thee with others. *6thly*, To Rejoice and Love to be despis'd; because 'tis reasonable, thou should'st Love what is Just; and it is Just, that what is so truly despicable should be despis'd. *7thly*, Never so to discover the Sense of thy Misery, as to expect or raise others Commendation, upon the Sight of thy Humility. *Lastly*, I enjoin thee to be content with the worst of things; not to Murmur, or be in Passion, because they are not to thy liking: Not to be uneasie, if thy Affairs succeed not to thy Wish: Not to seek to satisfy thy Curiosity, Inclinations or Pride: Not to desire the Great, the Rich, the Honorable, or the Expensive Things of this World; but considering thy self as a most Vile and Unworthy Sinner, ever to judge the worst and meanest things, much better than thou deservest.

This is the Sentence of Justice. There needs no more then, but to be truly Humble, and Self-denial will follow.

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follow in upon it ; since a Man cannot have a true Knowledge of himself, but the Sight of his Unworthiness and Ingratitude must convince him, that not Favor, but Humiliation and Punishment are his due. And if this must be the result of a general View of himself, what must it be, when he examines every Sinful Inclination in particular? When he calls Pride to the Bar, and having heard a long Catalogue of all her Crimes, sees these two Points evidently made out against her; that she grows worse for every Favor, that is shewn her; and that the End of all she does is his Eternal Ruin; what can be the Sentence, but of perpetual Confinement at least, a Refusal of all Petitions, and to let her Starve, since she cannot be fed, but with his Ruin, who gives her Bread? It is the same of all other corrupt Inclinations; let Sensuality, Intemperance, Prodigality, be call'd to an account; and what follows close upon them, but endless Mischiefs of as many as have been Favorable to them; Ruin of Reputation, of Health, Estate and Soul; with the Loss of Comfort to such as have a Concern in them? Now let these be seriously consider'd by any Man, that has

has but the least Glimpse of Reason and Faith, and let him tell me, what Reason there can be for Indulging and shewing Favor to these Inclinations. He knows, they are Evil in themselves; he knows, they do him the greatest Mischief; he knows, he cannot Yield to them in any kind, but 'tis to strengthen Enemies against himself: What therefore must all Indulgence to them be esteem'd, but like making much of a Disease, which is to Kill him; like encouraging Thieves, which are to Plunder him; like feeding Wild Beasts, which are to Tear him in Pieces?

Are these then to be favor'd, or to be discountenanc'd and punish'd? What if he should see a Common-wealth, where Pick-pockets were encourag'd, Robbers and Murtherers were most in favor with the Magistrates, had all their Petitions granted, their Contrivances for doing Mischief approv'd and confirm'd by Authority, and their wicked Extravagancies rewarded: Where Enemies and Pirates were allow'd to make their Preys, and daily Contributions rais'd to furnish them with Ammunition and Arms: Where Mutiny and Rebellion were applauded, and the Heads of Faction put into
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all Places of Trust: Where Immorality, Prophaneness and Irreligion were dignified with Titles, and Triumphs decreed for the Promoters? Would not he be surpriz'd at such Confusion, and without the help of Deliberation conclude; that certainly the Governors were Mad, and design'd nothing, but the total Subversion of their State? If so, let him but keep his Senses, and tell me his Judgment of the parallel Case. Is not every Christian a Commonwealth within himself? Is there not in this Commonwealth Thieves, Pirates, Mutineers, Heads of Faction, Enemies, Rebels, and Setters up for Prophaneness and Irreligion? What else is Pride, Ambition, Covetousness, Sensuality, Prodigality, Intemperance, with Infinit other Abettors of them, as Sloth, Idleness, Liberty, Disorder, Vanity, Curiosity, Love of Diversions, of Entertainments, of Appetite and Ease? What is the Business of these, but to make Way for all manner of Wickedness? What is their End, but to Rob, Murther and Destroy? And what then art thou, O Christian, if the general Method of thy Life be to gratifie these, and favor their Requests; if thou givest them the Power, and the

the Disposal of thy Life be at their Command; if thou lettest them call for thy Money, and spend it at their Discretion; if thou esteemest it Honorable to observe their Ways, and then thinkest, thy self most happy, when thou art most advanc'd in them? Is not this the exact Case of the Common-wealth now mention'd, only, that thou go'st not abroad to see it, but find'st it in thy self? What then must the End of this be, but a speedy Destruction? And if Destruction be the Consequence of yielding to these Evils; then certainly the Discountenancing and Suppressing them by Self-denials, must be the Way to Peace and Life; and thus all those will do, who have a true Knowledge of themselves, of the extreme Weakness and Misery, to which they are subject. Grant, O God, I beseech thee, to us thy Servants, this true Knowledge of our selves, that whereas Corruption and Ingratitude are our principle Ingredients, we may think nothing our due, but to be humbled; grant, that we may humble our selves, in the Denial of all that is Corrupt within us, and never indulge that with Favors, which deserves nothing but Punishment.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pen-
tecost.

THO' I have spoke at large, in the
in the foregoing *Sundays*, of the
Necessity of Self-denial, . and the
grounds of it, yet I must add some
Particulars upon the same Subject.
First, That, for the Practice, every
Christian would observe in what Parti-
cular, they stand most in need of Deny-
ing themselves: For tho' some are so
universally Corrupt, that they have
not only one Sore, but seem to be Ul-
cer all over; transgressing all the Com-
mandments of God, and therefore ly-
ing under a general Guilt: Yet with
the greatest Number, I hope, it is not
so. The Case of these, is, that tho'
they are subject to many Weaknesses,
yet there is some One or Two in par-
ticular, which are remarkable above
the rest, are their greatest Obstacles in
the Work of their Salvation, and if once
overcome, they might then go on with
crease of Hope, of Comfort, and of
Peace. Now whoever makes this dis-
covery in themselves, and a little Care
is sufficient to make it; their Care then
must

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must be, to Practice such Self-denials, as seem a proper Remedy for their ag-
grievance : For as they easily find Oc-
casions to encrease their Evil ; so they
may easily find Self-denials to mode-
rate and suppress it. This is no more
than to prescribe that moderate Degree
of Wisdom, as to consider or enquire
what Plaister is proper for their
Wound, and to apply it to the Part
affected. Where the Distemper then
is, there let the Self-denial be ; let each
Faculty, Part or Sense, bear the Trou-
ble of their own Cure, and in this
Trouble make some Satisfaction for the
Injury they have done. Let the Tongue
be confin'd to Silence, in whatever
subject it usually offends ; let the Re-
straint be put upon the Eyes or Ears,
if they have transgress'd ; let Industry,
Watchfulness, or Labor, be the Cor-
rection of Sloth, Laziness, or a Gossip-
ing Humor ; it will be in Vain to
complain of Pride, if Care be not us'd
for humbling it, in the Denial of its de-
mands ; to Lament the Violence of
an ill Habit, will be to no purpose, if
proper Self-denials are not oppos'd to
its Inclinations. In this manner are
Specific Remedies to be applied to e-
very Disease : Thus Impatience, Pas-
sion,

sion, Uncharitableness, Detraction, Intemperance, Sensuality, with all the rest, are to be corrected; and without this Method, no help can be reasonably expected either from Prayer or Sacraments; since there can be no Sincerity in these Exercises, but they must be all censur'd of as much Presumption and Rashness, as it would be to Pray for the Fruitfulness of the Earth, without making Fences, or using Means for rooting up the Thorns and Buskes, which are the Occasion of its Barrenness.

2^dly, That every Christian would be exact in practising such Self-denials, as are proper for the Time; that is, such as are necessary for complying with the Spirit of God and his Church. *Sundays* and Festivals are design'd for drawing the Soul nearer to God, and disengaging it from the usual Distractions of Idleness, Business, and worldly Solitude. Whatever therefore the Inclinations be, which press the Soul to pursue these on Days Sacred to better Employment, they ought all with Resolution to be withstood, and neither such Books are to be read, nor such Recreations us'd, nor such Conversation allow'd, nor such Business treated of, as are apt to dissipate the Mind with what

what is Sinful or Worldly, and carry it on in its usual Distance from God. Again, the time of *Lent*, and all other Fasts of the Year, are design'd for humbling Sinners, for overcoming Corruption, and making Atonement for past Offences. At these times then, it ought to be the Task of every Christian to live according to this Spirit of the Church, and consequently to Deny himself in all those Inclinations, which are contrary or disagreeable to this Spirit. What then is to be said of the usual Meetings of the World for Drinking, Gaming, Idle Entertainments, or Unprofitable Divertisements? What of Fasting and Sports? What of Profuse Expences? What of the Triumphs of Idleness, Sloth and Pride? What of Oppressing our Neighbor, or Prosecuting him with the utmost Rigor? What of refusing the Payment of just Debts, of Quarrelling, and Contention, and Biting, one another? What of living an undisciplin'd Life, and observing neither Hours nor Rule, but leaving all to the Chance of Company or Humor? Are these according to the Spirit of the Church? No, they are not, but rather the Method of such, as seem to have no Knowledge of Christ

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or his Church. All Inclinations therefore to these ought to be denied in Lent, and other Days of Humiliation, that so Christians may answer those Purposes and partake of the Mercies design'd for them in these Holy Institutions.

And what is to be said of Plays on such Days of Penance? I am sorry, there's a Necessity of putting this Question; for certainly it betrays a great Want of Christian Sense, in those, who make the doubt. The Question, in the Primitive Times, was, whether it was Lawful at any time to go to Plays; and the Fathers and Pastors of those Primitive Times were not only Positive in the Negative; but likewise declar'd them to be a part of the Poms of the Devil, which Christians renounce at their Baptism; and therefore pursued all those with the severest Invectives, who not regarding this Solemn Abjuration, were present at these Meetings. Their Reason was, because such was the Lewdness and Prophaneness of the Plays then compos'd and acted by Heathens, that Christians were oblig'd to have a Horror of them, and consequently, not to make them a part of their Entertainment. And what if now Christians are the Composers; does this alter the

the Case, if they let their Pen run in the Strain of the Heathens? If all do not so, yet tis too true of the greatest Part, and therefore they are without Excuse, who take their Chance, or indifferently go to all. And when we have heard the best Apologies, that can be made for them, yet none of these can sanctifie Plays so far, as to make them a suitable Entertainment for Days of Penance. For it is on these Days Sinners, Apprehensive of God's Anger, ought to humble themselves in his Sight, and be Solicitous in using such Means, as God has acknowledg'd to be powerful with him for the obtaining of Mercy; such as these are Prayer, Fasting, Weeping, Mourning, Sackcloth and Ashes, Self-denials, Works of Charity and Mercy. There is not one Penitent mention'd in Scripture, but whom we find seeking God in these Exercises. And what then has Modern Penitents to do with Plays? If they are not Lewd, yet who can say, they are not Idle Entertainments? If there be not Lewdness on the Stage, is there not yet such Liberties amongst the Spectators, as must give offence both to Eyes and Ears? Are not the greatest Number of the Spectators, such as are brought thither

thither by Idleness and Vanity; and how many upon worse Designs? Is not the Expence of them, both as to Time and Money, very Unprofitable? What then have these to do with Days of Penance? It must be an Indulgence to allow the seeing some Select ones at other times: But to make these the Entertainment of so many Hours on Days of Humiliation, is enough to provoke new Judgments; and those, who have not a Sense to understand this, give Demonstration, that they are not acquainted with the Spirit of Penance, and that they are more Sollicitous to please themselves than to find Mercy.

Is no Recreation then to be allow'd at such times? Let this be granted; yet still the Recreation ought to be suitable to the Times. I will allow a Necessity of some Relaxation, but I will not allow either Vanity, or Curiosity, or Self-love, to be consulted in the choice of it. These are some of the Evils, which are to be Lamented, and therefore not to be indulg'd; to be punish'd; and therefore not to be gratified. When 'tis a time for seeking Mercy, the Spirit of Penance ought to put the Whole Man, both Inward and Outward,

ward, under a Restraint. Table, Habit, Recreation, are all to be season'd with it, all to be manag'd with such Moderation, as neither to favor Corruption, nor be a Reproach to the Undertaking. Sober Conversation, Change of Exercises, and Visits of Charity, is Recreation enough for Sober Days; with these, Persons of Piety are contented all the Year, and may not others then be contented with them for a time at least?

But what if they can find no Satisfaction in them, but only in such things, as are here reprov'd? And what if they can Eat nothing with an Appetite, but what is hurtful to them? They must either correct their Appetite, or stand to the ill Consequences of it. Such Persons as these are under the greater Necessity of Denying themselves. For where the Soul is so wretchedly indispos'd, as to delight in nothing, but what is dangerous and prejudicial to it, it must either bear the difficulties of a Cure, or look for certain Death. And what other Cure can there be, than with Violence to stand against Inclination, and continue this Force, till it begins to approve and find a Relish in what is for its Good? Till it can be diverted,

verted, without being Mad; till it can be pleas'd, without going to the Devil for Sport; till it can be satisfied with what is Sober, be delighted in Visiting, Comforting or Carrying Relief to the Poor, and making that their Support, which Nature demands for the Price of a Play. This would be a proper Work on all Fasts, such as cannot fail of a merciful Assistance for the gaining true Health of Soul. Whereas an Indulgence in what is unbecoming, disedifying and hurtful, feeds the Distemper, encreases the Dissipation of a Giddy Mind, and improves Self-love, till it become an Ungovernable Monster, such as will make that Hand its Prey, which is so foolishly kind to it. This is the true State of this Case, and I pray God give all those a Sense of it, who are concern'd. If Self-denials are the general Method of the Gospel, they must certainly be the Method of those Days, which are design'd for finding Mercy. They are almost grown unfashionable even with the Exemplar: Teach us, O God, to be more familiar, with what is so much for our good, and forget not those unhappy Souls, who stand so much in need of thy Mercy.

Twentieth

Twentieth Sunday after Pente-
cost.

OUR Nature being so universally Corrupt as it is, and turn'd from all good, there is scarce any Duty belonging to our Profession, but it is still attended in the Practice with some Self-denial; whence it comes that those Christians, who are bred up by themselves or othersto too much Niceness, and are generally Courted in all their Humors, have the greatest Difficulties in a Virtuous Life, and stand most expos'd to the Dangers of their own Corruption: Because being little acquainted with what is to be denied, every Self-denial seems a kind of Martyrdom, and absolute Violence is Necessary to submit to it; and how can this Violence be expected from them, who know nothing but their own Inclinations, and to have all things bend to them? Hence we cannot speak of any Duty, but some Self-denial is annexed to it; and to require, that Christians be Virtuous, is to enjoin them to be strict in Denying themselves. So true it is, that except a Man Deny himself, he
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cannot be a Follower of Christ. Tho' I have spoke therefore very often of Self-denial yet it cannot be expected, this subject should be laid by, as long as we have any Duty before us.

For this Day therefore I add, that Christians ought to be doubly careful in Denying themselves in all such Inclinations, which are not only Evil, but likewise are of such an Extensive Malignity, as to do Mischief to others. The Reason is: because tho' we have some sort of Knowledge of our own Sins, and can make some tolerable Conjecture of our Repentance: yet when we come to draw others under guilt, we do not know how far this Evil spreads; neither can we tell, what Repentance or Atonement is Necessary for making our Peace with God, or satisfying for the Injury done to our Neighbor.

And now under this Head, I do not so much direct my Discourse to such, as give themselves the liberty of running into all kinds of Extravagancies, and value not what Injury they do to others, so they can but gratifie their own Vicious Passions; but I speak to those, who pretending to Salvation, are yet not watchful, as they ought to be; and

allro Weakness, Colledge, or Indif-
 erence, take some Liberties of pleasing
 themselves, with the Prejudice of
 their Neighbor. To these therefore I
 prescribe such Self-denials, as are Ne-
 cessary for preventing their Miscar-
 riage in the great Work of Eternity,
 which they seem to propose and desire
 to accomplish.

The first is in the Government of their
 Tongue, by Checking all Inclinations
 to uncivil and immodest Discourse,
 whether barefaced or disguis'd. Be-
 cause all of this kind is absolutely for-
 bid us Unlawful and Sinful. To do
 it upon any ill-Design is downright
 Wickedness; and by Way of Jest or
 Entertainment, is a Sinful Folly attend-
 ed with many Mischiefs, such as have
 no Excuse, in not being design'd, any
 more than a Man can be excus'd in
 Burning a House, because he set Fire
 to it in Jest, without designing to Burn
 it. Want of Intention may lessen or
 take off the Guilt in many Cases, but
 here this cannot take place, where do-
 ing the thing, is inseparable from the
 Mischief, and involves the Intenti-
 on, if not of Malice, at least of Folly
 and Rashness. To take shelter there-

fore in this, is not Divinity, but Imposture; such as all can see thro', who are not willing to be deceiv'd. Wherefore I cannot but admire all those, who seeming serious in their Proposals of Heaven, yet take a Liberty in this Point, as if it were likely to be no Barr to their Pretensions; whereas the Sin is notoriously Scandalous, and the Guilt of such Jests will not be easily wip'd off, even with their most serious Tears. A Self-denial therefore here is Necessary, such as may be Proof against the Temptation of Wit and Inclination; and whatever the difficulty be; yet much greater will be the difficulty of Repentance, if the Sin be not thus prevented; and so those will find it, who when they hope the whole to be discharg'd, may be surpriz'd with a great Debt brought in against them.

A Second Care must be, in forbearing all Narratives of what is uncivil, and more especially before Youth. The thing in it self is ill, because 'tis conversing with Filth, and making an Entertainment of what the Tongue ought no more touch at than Poyson; and how often is it, that such Narratives are taken up in compliance with

with Sensuality, which lies unsuspected, while it undertakes no more than to Relate, and gratifies it self, while it seems to pity others Misfortunes? But 'tis still much worse, while Youth are Witness of such Relations, since this serves to instruct them in what they cannot learn too late, and is such a Science, as cannot commend them, who were their Teachers; and yet were the thing examin'd, I believe it would be found, that by the help of these Imprudent and Rash Discourses, Youth generally receive the first Light into this Darknes. An ill Office for all, but more unbecoming some, who do it, whose Duty it is, not to hasten, but to keep danger at a greater distance.

A Third Care must be, in avoiding in Narratives all Oaths, Curses, and other Prophane or Irreligious Expressions; because all these are disedifying to Pious Ears, and of ill Example to others, who are too forward in taking such Lessons, tho' not design'd for them; and if it be to satisfy an Irreligious Humor, which is not yet so Impudent, as to shew it self, but only in this Modest Way, or to make Sport for others, who delight in such Impiety,

this still pleads with stronger Arguments the Necessity of Self-denial. And what if such Expressions are no Additions, but real Matters of Fact, does this justify the Relation? These would not take this for a Reason, should their Cook send Fowl up to their Table with Feathers and Guts. The Cooks find them so; but they expect, nothing should be brought to them, but what is fit for their Board. And why then should not they be as Cleanly as their Cooks, and bring nothing in Public, but what is fit to appear? If their Souls were as Christian, as their Palat is Nice, they would no more bear one than the other; they would leave Filth to the Scavenger, and not make the Dung-hill their Entertainment. All this then is unworthy of Christian Ears, and Self-denial ought to be employ'd in preparing all Narratives before they are brought upon the Board.

Infinite other Particulars there are, in which Self must be denied, for preventing whatever Injury may be otherwise done to our Neighbor's Soul. Those, who have not this command of themselves, but will rather venture this Murther, than spare their Jews, or de-

ny, their Inclination, divert themselves
 an too Dear a Rate, and then, how
 little they value their own Souls, by
 setting so low a Price upon their Neigh-
 bors. If these esteem themselves Chris-
 tians, it is not by their following
 Christ, his Charity in shedding his Blood
 for the Salvation of Man, is Demonstra-
 tion, that they have none, who sport
 and please themselves, if not in his Ru-
 in, at least in helping to make him
 Miserable.

Self-denial must have a farther part
 in the Moderation of such Commands,
 as are prejudicial to our Neighbor, in
 his Life or Health. 'Tis too frequent
 among those, who have others in their
 Power, to lay Commands on their
 Servants, and oblige them to Atten-
 dance, without any Consideration of the
 Difficulty, Hazard, Hardship or Injury
 it may be to them. This sometimes
 is the Effect of a Careless or a Haughty
 Humor, and too often of Immoderate
 Self-love, which has scarce Eyes or
 Feeling for any besides it self; it la-
 bors under the Earnestness of its own
 Desires, and is Tyrant enough to Sa-
 crifice others to its own Pleasure; it
 values not what others suffer, so it has
 but its own Wishes. Now whatever
 the

the Root be, whether of Neglect, Pride or Self-love, there is still something perverse, which ought to be denied ; for till a Christian comes to have such Consideration of his Neighbor, as to moderate his own Inclinations, when 'tis Necessary for his Neighbor's Good, he can have no Right to the Name he bears.

And if this be Necessary in regard of the meanest Servant, it is much more so in Respect of those, who are the Pastors of our Souls ; how then will they answer it, who to satisfy their own disorderly Humor in going to Bed late, or their Sloth in Sleeping in the Morning, oblige these to keep such ill Hours, that by immoderate Fasting, their Health is considerably prejudiced, and their Service by many Years shorten'd, which otherwise they might have done their Neighbor ? Is it not plain in this they are treated with Cruelty, instead of Charity ; and that their Lives, which ought to be spent in their Neighbor's Good, are by this made a Sacrifice to Sloth ? I own, there may be Occasions, in which going late to Prayers cannot sometimes be avoided, and therefore not to be reprov'd ; but certainly to make a Practice of it, in
Compliance

Compliance with a Disorderly and Lazy Life, is both Shameful and Cruel: And how far their Prayers will ascend towards Heaven, who come thus prepar'd to them, I cannot define, but I know what I fear. Here then Self-denial ought to take place for breaking such ill Customs, which have so much of Self-love in them, and so little Respect either to God or Man, that so all may be done to Edification. Thus where-ever we turn, we find Occasions of Self-denial; help all those, O God, who are here concern'd, and give them Grace to stand against all the Violence of evil Custom and a Perverse Nature; to yield to these, pleases for a time; but to overcome them in Compliance with Duty and the Will of God, is the thing we have all undertaken, the Exercise of a true Disciple, and the Way to a Crown.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

THere being still other Virtues belonging to a Christian Life, be-
 N 5 sided

does those we have hitherto mention'd
 there must be likewise other Self-denial
 also requisite for the Practice of them.
 And in Particular, since the Principles of
 the Gospel oblige its Professors to such
 a Meekness of Spirit, as to render them
 Easy, Gentle and Affable to all, there
 is a Necessity of denying themselves in
 whatever it be, which takes them off
 from the Practice of this Christian
 Meekness. I know, it must be own'd
 in some, their Temper is so unhappy in
 this Point, that Moroseness, Rough-
 ness and Ill Nature seem'd to be Mould-
 ed up with their Bones and Flesh, and
 strong Soul seems to be turn'd quite
 Sore: But however, as the Crookedness
 of Nature is subject to Industry and
 Grate in other Cases, so it is in this,
 so that tho' it may be difficult, and thus
 become a Task, yet 'tis a Task which
 may be overcome. It is visible in the
 most curious Beasts, what Industry
 will do wth these, by degrees, are
 tam'd, and brought to the Hand; these
 Christians must therefore lye under
 the Confusion, either of being more
 untractable than Beasts, or of intolerable
 Sloth, in not taking Pains to soften
 Nature into a better Temper. This
 done they have Reason to take; First.
 Because

Because it is a Constitution quite contrary to the Temper of the Gospel Spirit, which has Meekness and Affability for one Necessary Ingredient; and Christ commands all his Followers to learn it.

Disce a me: Learn of me because I am Meek and Humble. 2^{dly}, Because it is a great In-

disposition for performing the most Necessary Duties of a Christian Life;

such are Charity, Compassion and Mercy: There being nothing, that makes

a Man more insensible of others Misfortunes, and consequently less inclin'd to Piety, and Thoughts of Re-

lief, than a rough and morose Temper. Whence being very unbecoming the

Christian Profession in all, it has a particular Deformity, even to a Scandal in

those, whose Essential Duty it is to give Assistance to their Neighbor, such

are Pastors, and all Ecclesiastics. 3^{dly}, Because it deprives them of the best

part of Charity, and leaves them almost incorrigible under all their Weakness;

since few are to be found so Hardy, to venture with Advice upon them, who

by their Pierceness and ill Nature discourage such Charity, and threaten a

Scorn to those, who attempt it. 4^{thly}, Because of the perpetual danger they

are in, of losing their Peace by Con-

tention

rention and Quarrels; it being very
 natural for such Persons to give Af-
 fronts, and very difficult to put up any.
Lastly, Because of the great dislike all
 Persons have to this Humor; whence
 those, who are subject to it, can very
 seldom be welcom any where, as being
 fit neither for Friendship nor common
 Conversation. There is too much of
 Self-conceit visible in them for any to
 admire, or even to bear, except it be
 by Force; and hence they are seldom
 long in a Crowd, because 'tis their ge-
 neral Good Hate, to clear a Room,
 where they go. From these Reasons
 may these sturdy Christians find Mo-
 tives for Denying their ungrateful Hu-
 mor, and taking Pains to make it more
 Gentle. And if they do it not, I
 think they ought to suspect themselves,
 as unfit for this World and the next.
 Besides this natural Want of Meek-
 ness, there is another taken up, and is
 Affected or Artificial. This is the
 Misfortune of some, who think there
 is something Great in being Ill-natured;
 who cannot speak to any one Inferior
 to them, but is with such an Air of
 Contempt, as if their Breath were too
 precious to be spent upon such poor
 Animals. Hence they are always difficult
 of

of Access, carry it high, and are seldom free in their Words, except it be such as are Abusive, to express their Passion or their Scorn. All this is evidently the Effect of a great Weakness of Judgment, and of Pride. It is a Weakness, in not understanding, what true Greatness is, and setting a Value upon what is really Base and Contemprible. For what is more Contemprible, than what God Despises; than what the Devil and World laugh at, while they promote it? God Hates Pride, the Devil Triumphs in it, and the World, tho' it be Wicked enough to encourage it, yet cannot see it, but with Contempt. And what an Expedient then is this, for Christians to make use of, for distinguishing themselves, and gaining the Esteem of Great, when it is one of the things, which most lessens them both to God and the World? Must it not therefore be concluded, that such as depart from the Meekness of the Gospel, and affect such a Descriptive Way, as has turn'd Angels into Devils, and made Men to be the Companions of their Misery, have Reason to deny themselves in such pernicious Inclinations, and rather by Violence come to the Practice of Christian

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stian Humility, than be so much Fond of appearing above others; as to be pleas'd even with a Precipice, from which they must fall deeper.

There is still another Want of Meekness, not so much the Effect of Pride, as of Humor and Self-conceit: In those, I mean, who having their particular Dislikes, cannot be so much as Civil to those, in whom they observe the Marks of their Aversion. These have made their Observation, and 'tis now to them a Rule; where ever they see such particular Motions, such affected Looks, Behavior or Speech, there can be nothing good, nothing that can deserve a Civil Correspondence, Compassion or Relief; and how then are such Persons treated but with Moroseness, ill Nature, and, upon the least Occasion, with Expressions of Dislike? But this is not a Rule warranted by the Gospel; for tho' Sin is to be hated, and there is Authority for not contracting friendship, or conversing with notorious Sinners; yet I do not there find a Warrant for Judging of our Neighbors upon such Presumptive Observations, nor of admitting Aversions upon their disagreeable Mien, nor of Continuing Enmity by Humor or Dislike. Christian Civility,

Civility, Compassion and Charity, are by Christ's Appointment of a larger Extent, and therefore not to be restrain'd by his Followers; but to be practis'd, as he has ordain'd it: And those, who do otherwise, have not yet learnt Christ, but only the Pharisees; for 'tis nothing better than Pharisaical in Christians to be Civil and Compassionate to those only, whom they like, and to let those feel the effects of their Aversion, who are not fashion'd to their Mould. To these scanty Christians I must therefore advise a double Self-denial; one of their Judgment, by suspecting the Rule, as uncertain, which they follow, and to leave the Judging of Hearts to him, whose Prerogative it is to be the Searcher of them: For that however they have found their Observations true in some, yet they may easily be deceiv'd in others: since there is no such certain Connection between the Heart and the Looks; but the Wise are often mistaken. There are Grave Folks as well as Light ones; and how often is Vice under a Reserve, and the Wolf cover'd with the Meekness of the Lamb? He that has said to us, *Be ye as the Gentiles*, has told us the danger of being mistaken.

A Second Self-denial I advise of their Inclination and Behavior, so as to treat those with Meekness and Respect, whom they apprehend as little deserving it; and even then to offer all necessary Help, when Nature seems provok'd, and ready to kick. Because true Charity considers only the Necessity of Persons, without examining Deserts; it asks no questions, whether they be *Samaritans*, or *Jews*; neither does it bid them stand up, to shew, whether there be any thing agreeable in their Carriage or Looks. It is much more Generous than so, and cannot bear the Imposition of such Selfish Conditions: True Charity is as extended as Human Nature, and consults not Inclination, when its Help is demanded. Those, who follow not this Rule, but there only bear all with Meekness, where there is Dependance; there only are Moderate, where there is Fear or Interest; there only are Patient, where there is a Favorit; there only are Forward in their Assistance, where there is Inclination; and with others are generally Morose, Peevish, Impatient, and without Compassion; those, I say, who make this Distinction, and are thus Uneven in their Ways, it is to be fear'd,

fear'd, have no more Charity than the Heathens; since, if they were Heathens they would do just so, that is, follow Nature without any regard to the direction of Faith and the Gospel. And have not then Christians of this Character Reason to Deny themselves? He who has declar'd to his Followers; that *except your Justice exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, Mat. 5. 20.* has shew'd them, how ill prepar'd they are for Heaven, and the Necessity they have of bringing their Hearts to a better Disposition.

It can be esteem'd no better than a Natural Religion, where Meekness, Moderation, Patience, Compassion, are subject to Nature only, and then only are practis'd, when Nature is either mov'd to it by Inclination, or aw'd to it by Interest or Fear: For what is there in this, but what Nature suggests, and is the same in Unbelievers, and even in Beasts, as in Christians? As long then as Christians are directed by these Principles of Nature only, they act not as Christians, and consequently whatever Patience, Compassion or Tenderness they shew in this Way, it is all lost as to Eternity; since nothing
can

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can

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can be accepted for that End, but what is the Effect of Grace, and undertaken in Compliance with the Will of God. This sanctifies Actions, and renders them fruitful; but without this they are left in their natural Barrenness, and can have no effect beyond this World. I wish, all those would think of this, who are directed too much by the Phancy and the Eye in all they do. And, O God, have we not all Reason to be mindful of it, since we must confess, Nature, Inclination and Human Respects, have too general a part in the best of our Life? Teach us, we beseech thee, a better Method; and since by thy Grace we are Adopted thy Children, let the same Grace have the direction of our Lives; that so while by Profession we are Christians, we may not be found at last to have lived as Heathens.

XXII. Sunday after Pentecost.

IF Meekness and Compassion are necessary Ornaments of a Christian, they are most particularly so, when he treats with the Poor and Miserable; for then their Beauty is doubled both to God and Man, whilst he brings Comfort and Courage

Courage to the Afflicted, and moves God to return him the Tenderness he has shew'd to others. But to express Compassion in Words is not enough, except he gives proof of his Sincerity by affording Relief. This God expects from all according to their Abilities, for since he is the Supreme Lord of all that Man possesses, God is the Proprietor, and Man is no more than Steward; and in Vertue of this Tenure, is he oblig'd to answer whatever Bills God draws upon him. The first is to supply his own Necessities and those of his Family; for with this God has positively charg'd him. The next is to supply the Necessities of the Poor; these have express Orders from God to ask Relief, and he has express Orders to give it; their Bills therefore cannot be protested, but by disowning his Right, and a Forfeiture of the Trust repos'd in them. To be severe therefore, and hard to the Poor, is not an Offence only against Charity, but against Justice too; for since God has declar'd, that what is given to the Poor, is given to him, the Poor, in their just Necessities, cannot be denied, but God, at the same time, in them is denied his own. Thus Charity and Justice are link'd together,

gether, and what is ask'd by the Poor as a Charity, is demanded by God upon the Title of Justice.

But what God thus demands, he has mercifully made it Man's Interest to give, in declaring Alms to be most powerful with him, for turning away his Anger, for obtaining Pardon of Sin, the Assistance of Divine Light, and Grace, and Mercy at the Day of Judgment; so that whereas our Necessities are here infinit, and the Dangers before us above all that can be comprehended, we have here the Assurance of an Expedient, such as will be the Remedy of our Wants, and our Security against all, whatever we have Reason to fear. And here now let those consider their Management, who being distinguish'd from infinit Numbers, in the abundance they have receiv'd, and in this having Opportunity of laying up a Treasure in Heaven, prodigally Waste what they have, in gratifying their own Corruption, and neglect all those great Advantages, they might otherwise make in the better use of their Money. But having so often spoke to these on other Occasions, I forbear Repetitions, and turn to the other Extreme; those Christians, I mean, who do not Waste,

but

but either unprofitably lay up their Talents in a Napkin, or seek no other Improvement, but what is useless to them.

These are they, who in Scripture are call'd Covetous; and what their Sin is, the Apostle sufficiently declares, who seldom mentions Covetousness, but he terms it Idolatry, which is the worst of Crimes, no less than a renouncing of God; and says, 'tis one of the Sins, for which the Wrath of God comes on the Children of Disobedience, Col. 3. 5, 6. It is Idolatry, because Covetous Persons make Money their God, and give all that to it, which is due only to him. They Love Money above all things, they place their greatest Confidence in it; they Serve it, and are even Slaves to it; they Seek it before all things, that is, with a Solitude due only to Heaven; they Make it their Happiness, and for the sake of it, Despise the Will and Commands of God, Neglect their Souls, and Slight all the Promises of future Happiness, which God has made to them: And what is this less, than setting up their Money in the Place of God? What less than worshipping and adoring it?

As to our present Subject, it is plain, that

that the Generous oppose the Orders of Providence, in keeping their Money lock'd up from the Poor, and rather than part with it, chuse to forego all those considerable Advantages, God offers them, upon a better use of their Riches. They hear, how valuable Mercy is, how desirable a Good it is to obtain Pardon of Sin, and to be deliver'd from the Consequence of their past Iniquities; but in their Hearts the Love of what they at present have in Possession, so much outweighs the Goods of Faith, which are yet to come, that they cannot be perswaded to lay down their Money for the Purchase. The Price of Heaven seems with them to be kept up too high, if Money is to be laid down for it. And hence all the Encouragement God gives, and the Promises he makes to such as are Merciful in relieving the Poor, make no Impression on them; they are contented to venture all that is to come, so they may keep their beloved Idol.

Whence it is evident, their Faith is not great; and their Confidence in God is less, who resting with Comfort in their Money, dare not trust in God; nay, when they hear, what solemn Engagements he has made to such as are

are Christians, yet have not the Heart
 eye to Men, upon such Premises, nei-
 ther can they depend upon him. Then,
 how very Inconsiderable is the Case of
 their Souls, who making all kind of
 Provision for this Life, and being afraid
 of wanting, have not the least Propor-
 tion of Solitude for their better Part;
 but put all this to the Hazard, so the o-
 ther may be secure. Were Heaven
 of their Concern, they would be afraid
 of losing it, more than of Starving,
 and do as much for obtaining it, as in
 providing for this World. But now,
 whilst they have it in their Power to
 engage Heaven to them by the good
 use of what they possess, and yet pass
 by all these favorable Opportunities,
 rather than let go any part of their Mo-
 ney, 'tis but too plain, that the Love
 of their Money is many degrees above
 the Love of God, and that their Soli-
 tude is not to save their Souls, but
 their Money.

Then again if it be consider'd, into
 how many particular Sins these Per-
 sons are drawn by their Covetous
 Temper, it will be too apparent, that
 if they can make any Defence against
 the Charge of Idolatry, yet their daily
 Provocations will still arm the Wrath
 of

of God against them. I do not however pretend to make them sensible of them; because where the Heart is possess'd with this Passion, it is indispos'd for discerning its own unhappiness; but rather finds Ways to justify such things, as have Injustice and Oppression writ in the Front of them. Others may easily see it, and be surpriz'd to see what Ways these generally take to encrease their Stock; what Frauds, what Oppression, what Injustice, what Severity, Persecution and Cruelty; how Watchful they are to take all undue Advantages of their Neighbors Oversights, Weakness and Misfortunes; how they pursue all with the utmost Rigor, have not Eyes to spare the Miserable, nor any Bowels of Compassion towards the Distress'd. Whence without reflecting upon the Inward Man, which lies under all the Deformity of unjust Contrivances and unreasonable Desires, it may be seen, that the general Method of their Lives is contrary to the Truth, Compassion, Justice and Charity of the Gospel. And now, if we add to these their Domestic Sins, in their Cruelty to those of their Family, in Robbing them of what is for the Comfort and Convenience

ence of Life, in exposing Children to great Difficulties, and thro' a perpetual Uneasiness to many Temptations, in filling their House with Repining and Clamors, with a Thousand other Evils, unknown to all, but those that feel them, it cannot be question'd, but their manifold Guilt makes their Souls an Abomination to God, and there can be no wonder in the many Woes in Holy Writ pronounced against them. *Where are they, who heap up Silver and Gold, in which Men put their Trust? They are cast out, and gone down to Hell. Baruch. 3. 18. Woe to you Rich, for you have receiv'd your Comfort. Luke 6. 24. It is easier for a Camel to go thro' the Eye of a Needle, than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God. Mat. 19. 24. They, who will be Rich, fall into Temptation, and into the Snare of the Devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful Lusts, which Drown Men in Destruction and Perdition. For the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil. 1 Tim. 6. 9. Go to now you Rich Men, Weep and Howl for your Miseries, that shall come upon you. Your Riches are corrupted, and your Garments eaten with Moths; your Gold and Silver is canker'd, and the Rust of them shall be a Witness against you, and shall Eat your Flesh as it were Fire: You have*

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heap'd to your selves Wrath in the Last Day. Jam. 5. 1.

If thus God's Word speaks of all, who Love Riches ; such as Love them with the excess of Covetousness cannot expect the Rigor of these Expressions should be abated to them ; but have Reason, by a timely Care, to prevent their being made the Instances of these frightful Truths. This cannot be prevented, but by an entire Change of their Hearts ; for if they consider the Effects of God's infinit Love to Man, and the great Duties, that are exacted from him, and then reflect, that they are wanting in all ; that they neither Love God ; nor Seek him, nor Serve him, nor put their Trust in him ; nor have any Concern in satisfying any of those Duties of Charity, which they owe their Neighbor ; that they regard not the Example of Christ, nor give Ear to his Doctrin ; that they run expressly contrary to the Current of the Gospel ; what can they think, but that if their Hearts be not chang'd, they can expect no Salvation thro' Christ ?

And let not those be too forward in flattering themselves, who find their Hearts free from that excess of Covetousness, which has been here describ'd

for

for if the Scripture be regarded, there is no need of more, than to Love Money, to be in the danger of Eternal Ruin. If the Heart then be too sensibly affected with this Love, there is Reason enough to fear; even tho' there appears nothing, but Innocence in view; because this Love is a Passion, which sets all the Faculties of the Soul upon the Biass, and so strongly bribes the Understanding, that this has no Power to see a Thousand Sins, which favor this Passion, and 'tis only some monstrous Extravagance, that will make it Start. These therefore have Reason to make a double Examin of all they do, especially where Money or Interest is the Concern; for otherwise they may very easily be deceiv'd, and live on under a manifold Guilt, and yet with the Confidence of being Innocent. Besides our Experience in this Point, we have the Word of God in many Instances to give proof of this Blinding and Sinful Passion; let those therefore, who seem least to believe it in themselves, see they be not most deceiv'd by it. But it is thou, O God, must deliver us from this powerful Evil. Give us therefore Grace to make a Good use of thy Blessings, that we may nei-

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ther turn them against thee, nor rest in them; but, by thy direction, make them serviceable for our coming to the Possession of thee. Defend our Hearts against the Love of Riches, against Covetousness and a Worldly Spirit. How many Thousands have here perish'd! May we be no Addition to this unhappy Number.

*Twenty-third Sunday after Pen-
tecost.*

OUR perverse Inclinations teach us, that a general Self-denial is Necessary for a Christian Life. We have already shew'd this in several Particulars; the Addition of one more shall be the Conclusion of this Subject. This carries the Name of Curiosity; it has not place amongst the infamous Crimes, and yet, if not duly govern'd, opens the Way to many Sins. It has many Branches belonging to it.

The First is a Curiosity of knowing what is above our Knowledge, or such things, as God is pleas'd to hide from us. By giving way to this Inclination,

on, there is evident danger of entrenching upon Faith, which being a Belief of God, with a Simplicity of Heart entirely Confiding in his Truth, there can be no place, but for Submission; and if Curiosity creeps in, it must be Interpreted as the Effect of Doubting and Incredulity. Where this is, Faith is not sound, and if it be Voluntarily admitted, the displeasure of God may be justly fear'd; as in *Zechariah*, who, after the Revelation of a Divine Truth, demanding farther Confirmation of what he could not comprehend, did in this question the Truth of God, and discover'd his Unbelief. The Mysteries therefore of Faith, tho' Incomprehensible, are to be receiv'd, but not question'd; to inform our selves, what they are, is the Duty of Faith; but to give to Curiosity the Liberty of Searching into them, is Presumption. The Glory of the Noon-day Sun is too strong for our weak Sight, and they, who attempt it, find Darkness the Effect of their Rashness; what then must it be, for our weak Reason to Search into the Mysteries of God? *Solomon* has told us; *Qui scrutator est Majestatis, opprimetur a gloria. Prov. 25. 27.* He that searches into Majesty, shall be con-

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founded by its Glory. Blindness is the just Punishment of this Presumption: And the Evidence of this Punishment we find in our unhappy Age, in which the Liberty of Searching has almost extinguish'd Faith, and those are making haste to Atheism, who undertake to make New Discoveries of God. It is true here, what the Apostle says ; *If any Man thinks, that he knows any thing, he knows nothing yet, as he ought to know, 1 Cor. 8. 2.*

There is a like danger in the attempt of Knowing other things, which God has hid from us ; as in Searching into things to come, and in all Endeavors to discover the future Events of Life or Fortune. For this is a Disobedience to God, in transgressing the Bounds he has set us ; it is a less'ning our Dependance upon him ; and the Means, that are us'd, being what he has forbid, it is going to the Devil for Light. Upon which Subject, hear the express Command of God : *See there be none found among you, that asks questions of Soothsayers, and observes Dreams and Divinations ; neither let there be a Sorcerer, no Enchanter, nor that consults with familiar Spirits, or Diviners, and seeks the Truth of the Dead ; for all these things our Lord abhors,*

Deut.

Deut. 18. 10. Of all which *S. Augustin* says, that they are Arts either of a trifling or hurtful Superstition; they spring from a certain detestable Correspondence of Men and Devils; they are the Compacts of a Faithless and Deceitful Friendship, and are to be altogether avoided and detested by the Christian. *De doct. Chr.* c. 23. Upon this account all the Sins of this kind are always set down, as Transgressions of the First Commandment, and by this are declar'd contrary to the Faith and Love which are due to God. This Curiosity must therefore be set down no less than the Crime of Forsaking God.

The Second is a Curiosity of the Senses, and as far as this inclines to Immodesty or Sensuality, 'tis too well known, how Fatal it is to that Purity and Cleanness of Heart, which the Gospel requires; there being no Abomination under this Head, but what owes its Birth and Improvement to this Liberty of the Senses; and infinit Numbers having been led into the Depth of Vice, who have design'd no farther, than to satisfy the Itch of an unsuspected Curiosity. The Guard therefore here cannot be kept too strict, where a

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little Neglect is enough to let In the
work of Enemies. I need not come to
Particulars upon this Subject; our
own Corrupt Incinations teach us fully
enough what we ought to avoid; that
we ought to Check all that Curiosity,
which leads to the Knowledge of what
has no other Advantage in it, but on-
ly to gratifie our own Corruption, to
pleasure our Enemy, and lay us more
open to his Snares; that we ought to
stop our Ears against all Discourse of
this Nature, and turn our Eyes from
all such Objects, which help only to
convey Poyson to the Soul; here
Books, and Pictures, and Songs, and
Plays, must come under this Caution;
for 'tis amongst these Curiosity feeds,
and makes great Improvement; and
the Devil, if consulted, could not re-
commend a better School; and if to
these be added the Liberty, or even
Slight of Gazing, then he has no more
to do, than sit still and entertain him-
self with these, who take his Work out
of his Hands, and will be their own
Devil to themselves. So far this Curio-
sity leads; and those, who will not
be Watchful against the First Attempts
of it, may easily come to advance
thus far.

A Third Curiosity, is to enquire into the Concerns of our Neighbor, such as concern us not, and, it may be, 'tis not fit we should know. This Curiosity takes sometimes Ungentle Ways, by Sifting or Examining Servants and Children, and laying out Ears to every Whisper and Discourse, even when 'tis so particularly address'd, as to be design'd a Secret: Sometimes Sinful Ways, as in opening Letters, or by other undue Means breaking in, either by Force or Subtilty, into others Secrets. But whatever way it takes, this Curiosity is always odious to Men, displeasing to God, and very injurious to such as Practice it. *First*, By filling their Heads with many Impertinencies, such as fail not to disturb them in their best Duties, and hinder all kind of Recollection. The most Reserv'd are subject to too many Distractions; what then must their Fault be, whose Dissipation is the Fruit of their own Contrivance? *2dly*, By being the Occasion of Neglecting their own Business; there being none more apt to be careless at Home, than those, who are too busie Abroad: They who are earnestly looking at a Distance, easily Over-look what is nearer to them. *3dly*,

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O. s.

By

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By putting them in danger of many Rash Judgments; whilst their imperfect Information of things puts them upon making many Reflections and Constructions, such as have no other grounds but their own undue Inferences, Suppositions or Mistakes. *4thly*, By being the Occasion of defaming their Neighbor, since, as Pitchers ever filling are ever running over, so these, being full of their Novelties or Discoveries, cannot contain, but, by Way of Secret, publish all they know. And how often by these Spies are the most Scandalous Truths reveal'd; how often, by their Presumptions, are the most Innocent Blacken'd with Infamy? *Lastly*, By laying the Grounds of great Differenzes between Friends, Neighbors, and those of the strictest Tie; there being no more general Seed of Division, than the Treacherous Discoveries, Lame Relations, and Presumptive Constructions of these Busy, Inquisitive and Restless Christians.

A Fourth Curiosity is with earnestness to apply the Mind to such things, as are not agreeable to our State, but are a Hindrance or Distraction to it; as for Church-men and Religious to be Fond of Reading Poets, Plays, and Profane

phane Authors, or with too much eagerness to be bent to Music. For Gentlemen to be taken off from all Care of their Estates, by immoderate Divertisements, the Love of the Town or the Court. For Traders, by indiscreet Projects, by Love of Company, News, or Public Offices, to be diverted from the Business, which is the Support of their Family. And so of all other Conditions respectively. For tho' Recreation must be allow'd in all States; yet since every one, in whatever Condition he be, has Obligations belonging to his State, it must be every one's Business to satisfy these Obligations; and there cannot be a general, or any considerable Neglect of them, but it must be an Offence to God, and Injury to Conscience; because 'tis God and Conscience exact those Obligations from them. Hence to permit the Mind to be so affected with any thing else, as to be drawn from the due Solitude of performing them, is a hurtful Curiosity, and cannot be excus'd from the Sin of being Unjust and Faithless to their Trust and Charge.

Upon this Subject *S. Jerom* having express'd his complaints at large to *Pope Damasus*, of Priests being better acquainted

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quainted with Poets, than the Prophets; and having reproach'd the Sacred Virgins with the like disorder, he afterwards relates his own Misfortune; that having retir'd from his Friends into a Solitude, there to Lament his Sins, he often long'd for *Cicero* and *Plautus*, to give some Refreshment to his tir'd Spirits; and after reading them, he could not again take up the Prophets, but with a Dislike of their unpolish'd Stile. Upon which being one Day, in an Extasie, presented before the Judgment-seat, and ask'd what he was? He answer'd, I am a Christian. But the Judge replied, thou Liest; thou art a *Ciceronian*, and not a Christian; for where thy Treasure is, there is thy Heart also. And then commanded him to be Scourg'd. And this Holy Father says, that returning to himself, his wounded Shoulders, and the Pain he felt, was Demonstration, that this was not the Illusion of a Dream. *Ep. 22. ad Eustoch.* Thus this Father. And may not hence all see, that this Curiosity, which alienates the Heart from the particular Obligations of each Respective State, is not only Sinful, but may go so far, as to make void even the

the Character of Baptism, and unmake the Christian? If his Fondness of *Cicero* made him a *Ciceronian*, how much worse are others, who make that their Business, which is worse than reading *Cicero*, a Book, which has not the least Glimpse of Evil in it, and could be no more than a Dissipation of the Mind, but otherwise wholly Innocent, and without Reproof?

From these Heads it may be easily apprehended, how Mischievous Curiosity is in all its Branches, and that it cannot be indulg'd in any kind, without their Prejudice, who favor it. Let but this own Point be consider'd; that 'tis the Business of Curiosity to involve a Man in all that, which the Best have never made it their Business to decline; that while these Study to withdraw themselves from whatever dissipates the Mind, and lessens their Solicitude for Eternal Goods; Curiosity engages more and more in them, and affects those things most, which are unavoidable Distractions. Let this be well consider'd, and it will oblige us to Pray, that God will please to lessen in us this Distracting Evil; that being unhappily Subject to a roving Mind, and to infinit. Impertinencies, which
divert

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divert it from its greatest Concern, we may not so far add to our Misfortune, as to indulge that Inclination, which is so restless, as to be ever inviting us to new Distractions.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

BEing now come to a Conclusion of these Instructions, and in composing them having had daily Occasions of considering both the Gospel and the World, I will now take my Farewel of the Reader, by leaving him my Thoughts of the World, I mean of the Christian World, and they are these:

First, That if the World be consider'd in its general Practice, I cannot find, that it has any Faith or Knowledge of the Gospel; its common and most approv'd Method being contrary to what the Gospel teaches; and Christians living in the same manner, as they would do, if they were Heathens. This is the Judgment I make of the World, after I have examin'd and consider'd it now for some Years: And for the Proof of it, I must bring the World to the Gospel, and compare it. *First*, Then the Gospel requires of its Follow-

ers

ers to be Humble, and condemns in them all kind of Pride and Ambition. And what does the World? It sets up for Pride, promotes it in all its Ways: In this is the Contrivance of Thoughts, the Expence of Money and of Time. Let the Christian World be view'd in all its several Degrees, and taking the Generality, what is there but Ostentation and Vanity? And what more could it do in this, were it Heathen? 2dly, As to Justice, 'tis what the Gospel requires; so that all its Professors ought to do to others, as they would be done by; ought to avoid all Frauds and Over-reaching, and give to every one their own. And what does the World? The general Practice is to use Frauds, to Over-reach and Deceive; so that whoever treats of any Business, must stand upon his Guard, and be as well provided, as if his Business were with Pick-pockets or Thieves. 3dly, The Gospel requires Charity, that is, a general Love for all: And what is the Method of the Christian World? Much the same, as of the Heathen: Men Salute those, who Salute them; are Friendly to their Friends, and where Dependance or Interest obliges them to it; and to others observe a Form of Civility.

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Civility. But bating these Circumstances, which are common to the Heathen, is not Detraction the common Subject of Discourse; are not Injuries pursued, Animosities and Contentions kept up; are not Trifles made the Occasion of Debates, the Innocent oppress'd, the Cause of the Poor neglected; are not all pulling and tearing at one another, as if they were Beasts of Prey? And what is this better than the Heathen? *4thly*, The Gospel requires Self-denial, for subduing our Natural Corruption: And what is the general Practice of Christians? Are not they as Industrious as the Heathen, in seeking all that pleases, in gratifying their Senses, their Appetite and Passions? Is not Intemperance and Sensuality become so fashionable, as to have worn off all Reproach? Where are any Meetings, without Debauchery and Excess? That which should be their Confusion, is become their Entertainment and Mirth. How very few Families are Sober and Regular? Where is the Youth, that is not bred up in Corruption; where the Estates, that are not wasted in Folly or Vice? Thus instead of making War against Corruption, all is as generally turn'd into this.

this Channel, as if this were their Profession. *Lastly*, The Gospel requires its Followers to seek first the Kingdom of God, and rather to forsake all the Goods of this Life, than hazard those of the next. And what is the Practice? It is too generally the same amongst Christians, as Heathens; the Affections are set upon the things of this Life; these they seek. these they labor for; and not only to make Provision for Necessaries, but for the Purchase of what they ought to Despise, for the Support of those Passions, which have no better Objects, than Smoke or Filth. And when the Duties of the next Life come to interfere with the Conveniences of this; how easily is Conscience smother'd, and Reasons found to dispence with all that, which threatens present Loss in the Performance? Thus greedily to Heap up Money, or prodigally to Spend it, is the common Business of Christians; and so far are they from seeking first the Kingdom of God, that the greatest Number are scarce ever Serious in thinking of it.

2dly, If the World be consider'd in that part of it, which seem serious in the Profession of Religion, and being esteem'd Pious, lives in Hopes of future

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ture Happiness, I must own my Fears, that I cannot but be very Apprehensive of great Numbers of them, as to their Eternal Lot. *First*, Because, tho' they are not like the rest of the World, engag'd in what is notoriously Vicious, yet they seem unmindful of the Promises made in Baptism, they renounce not, as was there Solemnly engag'd, the Poms of the Devil; they live in the Profession of what is Vain and Idle, they are Prodigal in their Expences, too Fond of the World, and of all that is admir'd in it; too forward in gratifying themselves; they have too great a Value for the Modes, Customs, Authority and Example of worldly Men; more Fearful of their Reproach, than Zealous in following the Doctrin of the Gospel, and Example of Christ. Hence, how rare a thing is it, to find even amongst these the Humility, Moderation, Zeal or Charity of the Gospel? How rare are they, who Despise the World, who are truly Poor in Spirit, who Deny themselves, and take up their Cross to follow Christ? How rare they, who Love God above all things, who seek first the Kingdom of God, and give Proof of this in their Solici-
tude,

tude, in the Distribution of their Time and their Money? *2dly*, Because, tho' they follow the Practice of Religion, both as to its Private and Public Exercises; yet methinks, I see so much more of Custom and Form, than true Piety in their Prayers, so much of Worldly Vanity and Irreverence in their Public Assemblies; I see Confessions without Amendment, and therefore, I fear, without Repentance; I see Holy-days so much neglected, Fast-days and *Lent* so much abus'd, Penance so much laid by, that I cannot but fear, of these Christians great Numbers have not a true Sense of their Duty, and are but little pleasing to God.

From this Division of Christians and their Character, it is plain what my Sense is; that such as are truly in earnest in the Business of Salvation, must absolutely quit the former Rank, notwithstanding their Number and Authority; because these having forsaken the Ways of Christ, all, that desire to come to Christ, must forsake them. *2dly*, They must not be deluded by the Authority of the Second Rank, nor take all that for Sanctified, which they do, altho' they may appear Saints in Comparison of the others; because,

'tis

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'tis undeniable, that these take greater Liberties, than the Gospel approves; they comply too much with the World; they do not heartily espouse the Cause of Christ, in being zealous Followers of his Doctrine and Example.

What then is to be done? I prescribe nothing; but I think, all that undertake to follow Christ, and hope for Salvation through him, ought to inform themselves what it is Christ requires of them; they ought, with the Solitude due to their Eternal Concern, enquire what Rules Christ and his Apostles have left for the Government of the Inward and Outward Man, as they stand recorded in the New-Testament. For since He came to teach Christians the way to Life, they cannot expect Life for their Eternal Portion, if they walk not in the way which he has taught. And in learning his Rules, they are not to take the World for their Expositor; because he having declar'd, that the World is his Enemy, and hates him, it cannot be expected, but the World will ever be Partial, and put such Constructions on his Words, as are favourable to its own Ways, tho' disapprov'd, and absolutely condemn'd by him. Let the World then plead never so strongly;
let

let it plead Custom, Authority, Example and Prescription; let it argue from Difficulties and Inconveniencies, from Singularity, Reproach, and the complication of all Temporal Disadvantages and Losses; yet still it is not to be regarded; the Christian is to hold fast to Christ, follow him, and forsake the World. For 'tis not only in Faith, but in Morals too; that if an Angel from Heaven should come and teach otherwise than Christ and his Apostles have taught, yet in such case the Christian is not to adhere to him: What Authority then can the World, and worldly Men have, in their perverting and adulterating the Morality of the Gospel; when the Christian is preinform'd by Christ himself, that the World is not from Heaven, but an Enemy to it?

If then the World encourages Pride, and favours it in all its Demands; if it rewards Ambition with applause, and by Custom endeavours to take off the Scandal of its Guilt; yet the Christian is to follow the Gospel still, value and practice the Humility it teaches, and renounce all that Pride which the World recommends. If the World honours Riches, rates them as the Happiness of Man, and sets all those up as Ob-
jects

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jects of Envy, who have them ready at the Command and Service of their Desires; the Christian is to follow his Master still; repute Riches as dangerous to the Possessor, difficult in their Use, and sinful in their Love; that there may be the greatest unhappiness in the midst of Wealth, and that Poverty of Spirit is the more Substantial Blessing. In this manner must the Christian proceed in all other Particulars; set a value upon every thing, even as he finds them valued by Christ; admire what Christ admires; despise what he despises; go where he calls; walk where he shews the way; seek what he promises, and do what he commands. Those, who desire to be sav'd, must follow this Rule, and consequently are bound to forsake the World, so far at least, as it departs from the Gospel. Christ has so commanded it, and there is no Power on Earth can dispence with his Command: Happy then are they, who wholly separate themselves from the World, and are no more subject to its Authority, nor expos'd to its Snares, nor regard its Customs; these are at great Liberty for informing themselves of the Spirit of Christ, and have great Advantages for following it. Happy they too,
 who

who tho' engag'd in the World, make it their Business to be Faithful in whatever Charge God has call'd them to; and as for all other things, being convinc'd of its Injustice, neither make it the Rule of their Love or their Hatred; but esteeming all it admires to be Folly and Vanity, neglect its Proposals, and endeavor to live by the Spirit of Christ, that so they may come at length to the Possession of him. As for all others, who Professing Christ, are more Disciples of the World than of his Gospel, who admire its Applauses; love and seek what it Values, Measure their Happiness by its Possessions and Satisfactions, let the Authority of its Pride and Extravagance have the Ordering their Cloaths, their Furniture, their Retinue, their Table, and all other Expences; these I call upon with all the Earnestness of a Charitable Compassion, soliciting them to think of changing their Method; for that however they may be Orthodox in Faith; yet since they have taken the World to be their Master of Morals, let this have the Command of their Time and their Money, and live according to its Spirit, they have so far renounc'd Christ; and how vain then must

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must all their Hopes be, since serving
the World, the Salvation they expect,
must come from the World!

O God, enlighten, I beseech thee,
the Eyes of all Christians, that they
may discern the Ways of thy Gospel,
and give them Grace to follow them.
May they be truly sensible how the
World is an Enemy to Christ, and that
they cannot be his Disciples, who fol-
low it. How different is thy Spirit, O
Jesus, from that of the World! Grant
us this Spirit, that we may be wholly
subject to it, and by following its Di-
rections, be brought at length to a per-
fect Union with thee.

FESTIVALS.

SS. Philip and James, May 1.

ON the Day of these Apostles, it
will not be an unreasonable Sub-
ject to consider; whether it be good
and advisable for all Christians to live
and die in the Communion of that
Church, in which they were Baptiz'd;
or whether it be a Duty in any, to for-
fake

take that Communion, and join with another.

To make way for the Answer, these Apostles teach us, that to change Religion, is, in some Cases, not only lawful and commendable, but likewise a Duty Necessary for Salvation. For thus they did themselves, in leaving the Communion of the Jewish Church, in which they had been enroll'd by Circumcision (answerable to Christian Baptism) and by a Solemn Covenant made with the God of their Fathers, and then becoming Followers of Christ, that by so doing they might inherit the Promises. And while Christ commanded all his Apostles, to preach his Faith both to Jews and Gentiles, promising Salvation to such as believ'd, and pronouncing Damnation against all such as believ'd not, *Mark 16. 16.* it is plain, — that Christ requir'd all to forsake the Religion of their Countrey and Parents, as a Condition necessary to Salvation.

To change then from Judaism and Gentilism to the Christian Faith, every one that confesses Christ, must believe to be a necessary Duty; and that to let a Fondness of Education, of Country or Parents prevail against it, can be no less than damnable Obstinacy. But can

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the like Change be necessary or reasonable amongst Christians?

The Reasonableness of it seems not to be question'd, if we can but suppose, that amongst the different Communions of Christians, there are some better than others; for then there is place for Choice; and in things belonging to Eternity, it cannot but be reasonable at all times, to chuse that which is best. Thus we do in all things, that are but the Concern of this short Life; if we have a Purchase to make, a House to buy, or to provide for Cloaths, or Table, we have a general Solicitude for chusing that which is best; and for effecting this, how industrious are we in consulting Friends, in comparing one thing with another, in asking Advice, examining into Particulars, and taking time to consider? And how do we look upon our selves impos'd on, or ill treated, if those, whom we employ, make choice of the Worste, when Better, with a little more Pains and Care, might have been found.

Then are we not still more industrious in mending the Fortune of our Birth? He that is Born under a Thatch'd Roof, does not think himself oblig'd to be content with that mean Being; and
all

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all others, tho' in better Circumstances, are still forward to improve the Condition of their Birth; and if they succeed, there is no scruple in enjoying the Fruit of their Labour. Now, if thus in all things, we are Sollicitous for the Best, and labour to improve what our Parents left us; if this be what we commendably do in things, that are but of a short durance, and the concern is not very great, which way soever they be; must it not be more reasonable to take the same Method in things of Eternity, in which we cannot do too much for our Security, and to answer the Love God has shewn us, in what he has done for our Salvation? Certainly, if in any case it can be reasonable to chuse the Best, it must be so here; and it must be Matter of a just Reproach to those, who following this Principle, of Bettering themselves in every thing else, make Religion the only Exception, resolve to be contented with that, as they find it, and lye still where they are dropt; as if this were the only indifferent thing of all that belong'd to them, and deserv'd not to be made a Matter of Choice.

The Reproof King David gave himself, more deservedly belongs to the Men

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of these Principles? See now, says this King, I dwell in a House of Cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within Curtains, or under Skins, 2 Sam. 7. 2. He had rais'd for himself a Magnificent Palace, in which he had spar'd nothing that could beautifie or enrich it; but the Ark of God was still under Skins, as it had been brought out of the Desert; and, upon reflection, he could not but accuse himself, of having been more Solicitous for his own Abode, than for God; and the Conviction of this Injustice put him upon the Resolution of building a Temple; that so he might have the satisfaction of doing as much, at least, for God as for himself. And may not the like Reflection work something upon Men of these contented Principles? For while these make it the Business of their Lives, to improve and change for the better in all their Temporal Concerns; and in Religion only will allow no Change, tho' for the Better, but leave it wholly to the Change of their Birth; what is this but to seek Cedar for themselves, and leave the Ark to the Skins of the Desert? Nay, and how often, without making any due examination, whether their Ark be the Ark of God or no? If then, amongst the different Com-

Com-

Communion of Christians, to be sup-
pos'd, that some are better than others,
it must be reasonable to seek and
change for the Best.

But if we suppose farther, that some
of these Communion are Erroneous,
and teach False Doctrines; then to
change from the Wrong to the Right,
is not only Reasonable, but likewise Ne-
cessary. This Necessity all those must
own, who maintain the Necessity of
the Reformation; because the principal
design of this being to draw all Persons
from the Communion of that Church,
in which they had been Baptiz'd, to
join with another; this cannot be ju-
stified as Necessary, but upon this
Principle; that 'tis Necessary to change
from the Wrong to the Right; and to
dispute this, is to question the whole
Undertaking. Every Member there-
fore of the Reformation must confess
the Necessity of Forsaking an Errone-
ous Church.

But the Case is other wise clear from
what the Scripture teaches; for
since we are there assur'd; that a-
mongst Christians, there will arise
False Apostles, who will not spare
the Flock, but speak perverse things,
to draw away Disciples after them.

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Acts 10. 29. That many will be seduced by these deceitful Workers, who Transform themselves into the Apostles of Christ: That there will be Divisions, Sects, Schisms and Heresies: Since we are there farther taught, that all Christians ought to be Watchful against these; that they are to be avoided, as Persons, that fall from the Truth; that God will Fight against them; that Heresie is numbered amongst the Works of the Flesh; that it is rank'd with Idolatry, Adultery and Murther; and the Apostle declares of them all, That they, who do these things, shall not Inherit the Kingdom of God, *Gal.* 5. 19. Since, I say, we are assur'd from Scripture of these Two Points; First, That amongst Christians there will be False Teachers, Promoters of Divisions and Heresies. 2dly, That these are to be avoided, as displeasing to God, and leading to Perdition. It follows from hence, that amongst Christians, there are some, who are as much oblig'd to forsake the Communion of their Church, as they are bound to quit the Sins of Adultery, Idolatry or Murther; and that this is a Condition Necessary to Salvation. Neither can their having been Baptiz'd in such a Communion,

Communion, be any Plea for abiding in it; because, not only the True Church of Christ, but likewise the Congregations above-mention'd, guilty of Schism and Heresie, administer Baptism. And since God requires all to abandon such Congregations, this Command falls even upon those, who were Baptized in them. For Baptism, which makes us the Children of God, cannot possibly bring any Obligation upon us, of being disobedient to God, and of living in a State of Sin. All such then as have receiv'd their Baptism from the hands of False Teachers, are as much bound to forsake them, as any others, because God commands them to seek the Truth, and they cannot be united to Truth, but by breaking from those who detain them in Sinful Errors.

But if we suppose still farther, that, as there is but One God, and One Faith, so there is but One True Church of Christ, as it is in the *Nicene Creed*; that this One Church is the Mystical Body of Christ; that Christ is the Head of his Body: That Christ is the Savior of his Body, *Eph. 5. 23.* that to partake of the Influence of the Head, there is a Necessity of being a Member of his Body; that, according to the

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Sentiments and Practice of the Primitive Church, all Congregations, which dissent from this Body, are cut off from the Church, are under the guilt of Heresie or Schism, and consequently separated from the Head, who is Christ; that being separated from him, they have no part in his Promises. If this, I say, can be suppos'd from Scripture and the Antient Church, then it is Consequent, that in whatever Congregation a Christian has been Baptiz'd, if it was not in Communion with the One True Church, he is bound to leave the Communion of such a Congregation, and Incorporate himself a Member of the True Church, that so he may be in Communion with the Head, and in the Participation of his Merits, thro' which alone he can be sav'd. Hence Christ has made it the Interest of all, to seek for his Church, that by being Members of his Body, they may be united to him; and 'tis so far from being Dishonorable, to change from any other Congregation to this; that such a Change has all the Honor, which Truth, Justice; and the Will of God, can give it. Here can be no blemish of Temporizing or Inconstancy, any more than there was in the Apostles, in forsaking

faking the Religion of their Parents and Country, to follow Christ; for this is Following Christ; and for any to persist in any other Communion, because they were Baptiz'd in it, is nothing, but being Constant in Error, Constant in going out of the Way, which has neither Verrue nor Honor in it, according to the Gospel Scheme.

However therefore in our present Age, some have brought all Christian Communions so much upon the level, as to make One Monstrous Body of so many Disunited and Incoherent Parts; and others have made the Difference so inconsiderable, that a Change is not worth running the Hazard of what the World will say, and that the Circumstance of Baptism is more to be regarded, than any Advantage of Truth; yet I cannot but fear, these are so many Salvo's in favor of Error and Sloth: I am certain, they are Notions unknown to Antiquity, and therefore cannot but be surpriz'd, that so many Persons of seeming Piety, of Learning and Sense, should rest all their Hopes of Salvation on a System contriv'd for present Service, contrary to the Sense and Practice of the Church establish'd by the Apostles, which ought to be our Pattern.

O God, I beseech thee, to give to all, who confess our Lord Jesus, a greater Value for that Church, which he purchas'd with his Blood; give them a greater Value for Unity and Peace; that since he has manifested his Will, they may follow that as the only Way to Salvation, and not let Chance take Place of it, nor contrive Dispensations for finding Peace in Disobedience. Heaven, O God, is in thy Power alone, and there is no Way of gaining it, but by doing thy Will: How perversly Blind then are Men to pretend to Heaven, and yet not to do thy Will!

Invention of the H. Cross, May 3.

ON this Festival we cannot have a more proper Subject, than to speak of Sacred Images, amongst which the Cross will have its Place.

As we are Men, we keep the Pictures and Images of our Parents, Ancestors, Benefactors, Governors, or others, who by great Actions have engag'd Posterity to preserve their Memory: As we are Christians, we keep the Pictures and Images of Christ, the B. Virgin,

gin, Apostles, and other Holy Servants of God, who by their Virtuous Lives, and Constancy at their Deaths, have taught us, how to Live to God, and how to Die for him. The former sort of Pictures we keep in our Houses, where we Live and Converse as Men: The others in our Churches, Chappels and Closets, where we Live as Christians, and Converse with God. And both the one sort and the other we set up, as becoming Ornaments of the respective Places; as Memorials of the Persons Represented; and as Expressions of the Respect, Honor and Love, we have for the Objects, they Represent. If therefore we are demanded; why we keep the Pictures of our Parents, Children, King, &c? It is, because we desire to preserve their Memory, desire often to think of them, and to shew something of that Love and Respect, we have for them. And if it be demanded of us; why we keep the Pictures of Christ and his Saints? It is for the same Reason, that we may preserve their Memory, often think of them, express something of that Love and Honor, we have for them, and by looking on their Pictures, be often reminded of the Example they have given

ven us; as likewise have our Hearts possess'd with the Pious Affections, which they suggest.

This is the End, for which Pictures or Images of Holy Things are made, and this the Use; which none can dispute, but by stifling Nature, and disputing against the Experience of all Mankind. Neither has God forbid it, but rather given Encouragement to it. For tho' the Words of the First (or Second) Commandment seem to be a Prohibition; yet this cannot be the Meaning of them, because then making the Likeness of any thing in Heaven, or on Earth, or in the Waters (which are all there expressly mention'd) would be a Breach of the Commandment, and no Picture whatever could be made without a Sin. Which was never the Sense of any Christian yet. And that this is not the Sense of that Commandment, God himself has sufficiently declar'd, who after the Solemn Promulgation of this Law, gave express Order for making and setting up the Images of Cherubims at the Ends of the Mercy-seat, and promis'd that from between these Two Cherubims, he would speak to Moses, of all the things, which he had to speak concerning the Children of Israel. Two Cherubims shall

thou make of Gold; of beaten Work shalt thou make them in the Two Ends of the Mercy-seat, Exod. 25. 18, 22. Now God giving Order for these Sacred Images to be made, and to be set over the Ark, and in the Place, which he had chosen for himself, is Proof enough, that he had not forbid them to be made, and consequently, that the making them, and setting them up in Holy Places, has no Encouragement from God himself, who, instead of Forbidding, Commanded the doing it.

This then is not to be disputed, where there is any Regard to God's Word; Pictures and Images of things in Heaven may be made as lawfully, as of things on Earth, and likewise be set in Places Sacred to the Worship of God, without any Breach of the Commandment. But a farther Question is, whether any Respect or Veneration is to be given to Sacred Images? And here the Answer seems Obvious; that since 'tis impossible for us to have a true Love or Sense of God, but we must likewise have a Veneration for all things, that are Sacred to his Worship, or are any other Way nearly related to him; as we cannot but have a Veneration for the Church, because 'tis the Place dedicated

cated to God's Worship; to the Book of the Gospel, because it contains his Doctrine; to the Holy Vessels, because they are appropriated to his Service: So we cannot have a true Love for Christ, but we must have a Respect and Veneration for his Picture, which has so particular a Relation to him, as not only to Represent him, but likewise to excite in us a lively Remembrance of his Infinit Mercies and Love to Man, and, at the same time, put us in Mind of the great Debt of Love and Service, which we owe him. Where there is so particular a Relation to the Person of Christ, and so particular a Help in his Service, for raising our Gratitude and Love, I appeal to all Mankind, whether it be possible, to have a true Love for Christ, and yet not to have a Love, Respect and Veneration for his Picture, which has so eminent a Relation to him and his Service?

But abstracting at present from his Service, let the World, from its uniform Experience answer, whether, whatever the Affection of our Mind be towards any Person, the same does not extend to his Picture? To those, to whom we are Indifferent, we have the same Indifferency for their Picture.

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If we are averse to any for their Vice, Oppression, or a natural Dislike, we cannot see their Pictures, but with a like Aversion and Contempt. And who can say, that where they have a true Love, a real Honor and Esteem for any Person, they have not likewise a Love and Esteem for his Picture, desire to have it by them, are pleas'd in looking upon it, give it the most honorable Place, and value it above other things, which in Price are Ten Times the Value? If this be true, then must it not be allow'd, that they who Love Christ with all their Hearts, and are sensible of his infinit Love in the Work of our Redemption, must have a Love for his Picture, be glad to have it by them, be pleas'd in looking at it, the most honorable Place, and value it above other things of a much greater Value: And that this is both a Consequence and Argument of their real Love of Christ, as, in like Cases it is of other Persons?

If this can be allow'd, that we may have a Love for Christ's Picture, as for the Pictures of other Persons, whom we really Honor and Love; then, as in regard of other Persons, this Love is originally either Sensual, or of Friendship, or of Esteem for their Me-
rits

rits or Virtue, according to the Love we bear the Persons; so in regard of Christ, it must be a Love of Admiration and Gratitude, which may be properly call'd a Holy Love, a Holy Respect or Veneration: And the whole comes to be no more than this; that the Love, Respect, Honor and Veneration we have for Christ, obliges us to have a Love, Respect, Honor and Veneration for his Pictures, as for all other things, that have any eminent Relation to him, as for his Holy Name, the Place of his Worship, and for Persons and Things appropriated to his Service. And now, if Divines with their Distinctions, or Adversaries by their Niceties and Cavils, raise here a Confusion by their Disagreement in Modes and Terms; this ought to be no more an Exception, in a Matter otherwise as Plain and Obvious, as a universal Experience can make it; than it is against our Seeing or Hearing, or the Motions of the Stars, because Men of Learning can come to no Agreement about it. It is enough for us, that we know, we love the Pictures of the Persons, whom we love, as certainly as we know, that we See and Hear, and what signifie the Disputes of How, and How far, or Whether it be the Same or Different? These cannot

not invalidate Matters of Fact; neither need we be afraid of going on, because of the Dust or Bug-bears, which they raise in the Way.

But if we have an Honor, Love and Veneration for the Pictures of Christ, &c. How may this be outwardly express'd? In any of those Ways, by which we usually express these Affections of the Mind, as by Bowing, Uncovering the Head, Kissing; and because in the Church, 'tis a common Practice to express Respect by Candles and Incense, as to the Altar, the Book of the Gospels, to the Priest, the Deacon, the People; there can be no just Exception against thus expressing our Respect to the Pictures of Christ: Because, where the Respect is due, there is no Fault in the outward Expressions of it; especially, when it is done in such a manner, as is usual in other Cases of like Respect; as it is here in these, which are not confin'd to the Divine Worship, but are outwardly the same both to God, and all that belongs to him; and likewise to Man, to whom we shew our Respect not only by Bowing and Kneeling, but likewise, upon Occasions of Joy, by Lighted Candles and Perfumes. All these Actions

ons then being distinguish'd by the Intention and Affection of the Heart, so as by the different Motions of this to be sometimes Divine, sometimes Holy, sometimes Civil, sometimes an empty Fornality, Flattery, Treachery or Sensuality, they cannot deserve Re-proof, where they are serious, if the Heart intends no more, than to express that Veneration, which is due to the thing, to which it is given. Thus if we bow and uncover our Heads to Magistrates, because they are God's Vicegerents; if we kiss the Bible, because it is a Sacred Volume; if we bow to the Name of Jesus, because it is Holy; if we take off our Hats, when we go thro' a Church, because it is a Holy Place; if we bow to the Altar, because it is the Seat of Holy Mysteries, we in these Actions do no more than express the Inward Respect, we have for these things; and therefore, if this Respect be Rational and Just, the Expression of it in Actions usual in like Cases must be Rational and Just; and so likewise in Respect of Pictures or Images of Christ and his Saints.

But is there not more than this done to the Cross, since in the Hymn of this Feast, there is a Prayer directed to it;

O *Crux, ave spes unica, Plis adauge gratiam, reisq; dele crimina*: Hail, O Cross, our only Hope, encrease Grace in the Good, and cancel the Debts of Sinners. And on Good-Friday, when Adoration is paid to it? It must be own'd, there are such Words in the Hymn; but those, who reflect, how often St. Paul takes this liberty of using this Word Cross, for Christ Crucified, as twice in one Chapter, Gal. 6 12, 14. *Lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ.* God forbid, that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; will easily allow the same in this Piece of Poetry, and hence discover; that we no more pray to the Cross, than St. Paul glory'd in the Cross alone: Such Figurative Expressions are so common in all Books, and even in the Holy Scripture, that they must be very willing to be deceiv'd, who take offence at this; and they must be in great want of Objections, who lay hold of such Advantages.

There is more appearance for the Exception in the Ceremony of Good-Friday, and yet how can they who believe there is but One only God, and he a Pure Spirit, be now thought, upon one Ceremony, to take a Piece of Wood for God, or worship it as God? Those, who

who have Charity, would instead of judging thus, enquire, What is the Meaning of the Ceremony, and whether we may not kneel down and kiss the Cross, without making it our God? And to give them some Light, I ask of these, who are so difficult in understanding it; If they were on *Good-Friday* upon *Mount Calvary*, and should see there Pious Christians upon their Knees bowing down, adoring and prostrate kissing the Ground, where the Cross once stood; would they presently judge these to be Idolaters, and that they worshipp'd that *Mount* for their God? A Heathen might think so, I confess, who believ'd nothing of Christ, or what he suffer'd; but sure a Christian might easily have better Thoughts, and be so charitable as to believe, that what these did, was only to express their Gratitude and Love to Christ, who for them shed his Blood in that Place. If this may be so understood, then let those who take offence at this Ceremony know; that on *Good-Friday*, the Cross is a *Mount Calvary* to us; that we bow down and prostrate kiss it, as we would do that Sacred *Mount*, were we then upon it, in acknowledgement of Christ's infinit Love to us, and of the
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Mercy we have receiv'd by his Dying
 for us; that we no more take the Cross
 for Christ, or adore it for our Redeem-
 er, than those Christians do the Mount.
 And that whilst we thus express the
 Affections of our Soul to our Crucify'd
 Lord; yet should any Enemy of our
 Faith tell us, That the Cross is our God,
 and threaten us with Torments, if we
 did not, as such worship it, and pray
 to it, we should, through the Divine
 Grace, as readily chuse Death here,
 as if we were commanded to worship
 the Idols of the Heathens. This is
 what our Religion teaches us; to ho-
 nour the Cross, and kiss it in Memory
 of his Wounds (as Jacob might have
 done Joseph's Coat, when he wept over
 it, and suppos'd him dead) but rather
 Die, than make it our Idol. In this is
 plain Sense and Truth, and such as one
 would think, might be easily understood
 by all; and so I believe it would, were
 there not more Art us'd for disguising
 the Truth, than there is true Desire for
 knowing it. The difficulty of this
 whole Point is no more, than uncover-
 ing the Head to the Chair of State, or
 kissing the Bible; and yet see what Un-
 charitable Debates there are about it.
 O God,

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O God, thou knowest our Hearts, that we believe thee our only God, that we hope and put our Trust in thee alone, and detest the Abomination of giving thy Honor to another. To thee we appeal, who know'st the Truth and Justice of our Cause: It is some Comfort, that we are judg'd here unjustly by Men; because Christ is our Example in this, has foretold it to his Servants, and promis'd it a Blessing. But our greater Comfort is, that our Eternal Lot is in thy Hands, who judgest according to Justice.

Nativity of S. John Baptist, *June 24.*

HAVING discours'd on last Holy-day of the Images of Christ and his Saints; and there being something more to be said on this Subject, I take the liberty of adding it here; not thinking it at all incongruous, on Saints-days, to publish and clear the Doctrine and Practice of the Church.

I there shew'd, that every Faithful Soul that believes in, and honours God,

as God, must have a veneration for all Holy Things, which have any eminent relation to him and his Service, and consequently for the Pictures or Images of Christ and his Saints, because of their eminent Relation to those whom they Represent, and the great help they are to us, in raising our Minds to Heaven, and quickning us with a desire of following their Example. But now the Question may be, Whether, by the use of such Pictures and Images, Ignorant People may not be drawn into Idolatry, Believe some Divinity to be in them, Pray to them, and put their Trust in them? Because so they seem to do, whilst in their Prayers they lift up their Hands and Eyes to the Images before them, bow down to them; and how often are they seen to throng about some particular Image, with a more than ordinary Confidence of having their Petitions granted; and afterwards cover the neighboring Walls with their Presents in acknowledgment of the Favours receiv'd?

As to this Question, there can be no difficulty in owning, that as there has been great Abuses in this Point, even mention'd by St. *Augustin*, *De mor. Eccl.* c. 34. speaking of the Unlearned Multitude;

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titude; so there may be still. But if
the Church has taken due care to pre-
vent all such Abuses, then these are not
to be charg'd upon her, as the Effects of
her Doctrin; because her Doctrin is
positively to disclaim them, and like-
wise to provide against them. Let it be
observ'd what she teaches; *First*, That
as to the Images of Christ, &c. no Di-
vinity is to be imagin'd to be in them.
2dly, That there is no Power or Virtue
in them. *3dly*, That nothing is to be
ask'd of them. *4thly*, That no Confi-
dence is to be placed in them. *5thly*, That
if any Representation be made of God,
that the People be taught, that God is
a Spirit, that he cannot be seen by Mor-
tal Eyes, that the Divinity cannot be
express'd by any Figure, or drawn in Co-
lors. *6thly*, That if any Abuses have
crept in amongst the Faithful, she ear-
nestly desires they should be rooted out,
and recommends it to all Bishops, to
see that the Faithful be thus taught,
and no Superstition tolerated amongst
them. All these Particulars may be
gather'd out of one Chapter of the
Council of Trent, *Sess. 25*. Now if this
be observ'd, who can say that any A-
buses in this Point are taught, or even
favor'd by the Church; or, that her
Doctrin

Doctrin is to be charg'd with whatever Superstitions are found amongst the People; since her Doctrin is contrary to them, and the Suppression of them is given in Commission to her Pastors? There might be as much reason to impeach Lawgivers of all the Crimes of those who break their Laws, as this.

But now as to Matter of Fact, it is true, that both the Ignorant and others pray in the Posture describ'd, with their Hands up, and Eyes fixt on a Picture or Image, and often Bowing themselves down; and in the same manner they Pray at other times, when they have no Picture before them, but have their Eyes fixt on the Walls, Wainscot, Ceiling, or a Landskip of Arras, as it may happen: Now what Argument is this, that they pray to Pictures, any more than at other times, they pray to the Walls? If their Eyes be open, they must be fixt on some Object; and if this be evidence enough for By-standers to judge what they pray to and adore, then who can be exempt from the Scandal of Idolatry, but those who never pray? All this then is no better than trifling. It must be allow'd, that there is no obligation

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tion of Praying with our Eyes shut;
and if our Eyes, when open, must be
directed to something, why not rather
to some Picture of Christ Crucify'd,
which may be some help in confining
and enflaming our Thoughts, than to
any thing else, which may be a distra-
ction to us? For this reason then, when
we go to Church, we turn to the Altar;
and there being a Crucifix, the great-
est numbers likely, have their Eyes up-
on it: Now if Strangers coming in,
and observing this, presently judge, it
is that we worship, and pray to. This
Judgment is Rash; and *Daniel* might
with the same justice be accus'd for
Worshipping the *East*, because he al-
ways bow'd that way. These, before
they judge, ought to inform them-
selves, what our Faith and Doctrin is;
and when they have seen what we are
taught, as above; That there is but
One only God, that all Good must
come from him; that Images are only
Representations of Holy Things, fit to
prevent Distractions, and recall our
wandring Thoughts to God; that
there is no Power or Virtue in them;
that we are neither to pray to them, nor
confide in them; may not this lead
them to a more moderate Judgment,
and

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and give them reason to hope, that however the Outward Action seems surprizing, yet we cannot be so strangely stupid, as to act expressely contrary to what we believe, especially in such a Matter, where Common Sense is enough to inform us of the Absurdity? So much Charity, as this, might be reasonably expected; for while the Heathens find such favour from Learned Adversaries, as to be judg'd not so stupid, as to worship and pray to Stocks and Stones, the Work of their own Hands; why may not this Charity reach us, who have both our Councils, Catechisms, and the Professions of our Faith to prepare them for this more favorable Construction?

But why then such crouding about some Particular Images, if they had not some more than ordinary confidence in them above others? For the same reason, that the Blind and Lame crowded about the Pool, by the Sheep-Market in Jerusalem, call'd Bethesda, John 5. 2. If God is pleas'd to manifest the Wonders of his Power, for the relief of the Miserable, in one Place more than another, there can be no more surprize in seeing the Miserable thronging there, than in finding those Doors

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364 *Nativity of S. John Baptist*,
most crowded with Beggars, where
they have generally most Relief. We
see this Pool was particularly chosen a-
bove all others, as was *Jordan* for the
Cure of *Naaman*, and the Pool *Siloam*,
for giving Sight to the Blind, *John*
9. 7. If then God has in like manner
signalized any particular Chappels, as
he did these Pools, by some Miraculous
Effect of his Goodness, this is like a
Call to the Distress'd, who being soli-
citous for Help, will certainly come
there to seek it, where they have most
reason to hope for Success; and still
with a Confidence as entire in God, as
those might have, who went to the *Fish-
Pool* to be Cur'd; since whatever the
Chappel, whatever the Crucifix, Image
or Picture be, they know the Power is
wholly of God, and that the Place of
manifesting it is his free Choice.

But what means the Custom of fast-
ning Presents to the Walls of some
Chappels, and that these are cover'd
with Arms, Legs and Eyes of Wax, &c.
These are Grateful Memorials of Fa-
vors receiv'd, the suppos'd Effect of
Prayers offer'd there; and are no more
matter of wonder, than to hear of *Ja-
cob* setting up a Stone as a Remembrance
of God appearing and speaking to him
in

in a Vision, *Gen. 28. 18.* Or *Joshua* commanding Twelve Stones to be set in *Jordan*, to serve as a Monument of God's Goodness, and a Memorial to Generations, of his carrying the Children of *Israel* through *Jordan*, into the Land of Promise, *Josh. 4. 7.* If Christians have reason to believe, they have receiv'd Signal Favors from God, it is no more a Fault in them to be Grateful, than in the *Jew*; and if they set up Memorials at the Place, the Instances mention'd, will justify the doing it. Tho' Primitive Christianity gives unquestionable Authority; since this very Practice is recorded by *Theodore*, as observ'd by the Christians of his Time, and being approv'd then, cannot justly be condemn'd now.

Thus stands this Point, and upon a due Consideration, as I think, of the whole, I cannot but hope, there may be some Accommodation in it; I do not mean with those, who carry on all by a Blind Passion, but with Men of Moderation. For since the Church has positively declar'd against all Abuses, and Superstitious Use of Images, and requir'd that they be abolish'd: Since she declares, they have neither Power to Hear or Help. Since she encourages

Q 3

them

them only, as the Ornament of Churches, the Remembrance of Holy Histories, and as Memorials of God's Power and Goodness, fit for raising Devotion and Gratitude. Since she judges them incapable of all Honor for themselves, and numbering them amongst things consecrated to God's Service, declares them Honorable only, upon this account, for his sake, to whom they belong, like all other Instruments of Religion: Since this is due, and in her Profession of Faith she requires no other Honor to be given them, than what is due, *Debitum Honorem ac Venerationem impertiendam*. Since she declares all her Ceremonies regarding them, to be no more than an Expression of this Honor; there seems no more in this, than what I find allow'd by Moderate Men of other Communions; and the difference that remains, is chiefly in Terms or Words, in which, one would think, there might be a possibility of coming to a right understanding.

This seems to be the Sentiment of *Grotius*, who thinks, that if the Ambiguous Words, which by their various acceptation, distract the Minds of Men, were set aside (namely, Invocation, Adoration, Worship, Religion, Honor:)

nor :) and if in things themselves, the Indifferent were distinguish'd from the Unlawful, there would be fewer Seeds of Contention : *Judgm. of Rel.* It is plain enough, we use all these Words in a much larger Sense, than others are willing to take them. But since they are own'd by all to be Equivocal, Common Justice will allow us the liberty of declaring the Sense in which we use them ; and if the Sense be such, as others approve, is it not pity that Peace should be broken, and very disedifying Contentions kept up for Terms only ? In Trivial Matters such Disputes are neither agreeable to Common Civility, or Good Nature ; and they must be own'd the Effect of a Wrangling Temper, or of Passion. In Matters of Religion therefore, they ought to be banish'd ; and the Precept of Charity, and keeping Peace, so much recommended in the Gospel, ought to be sufficient Motive to it. Grant this Spirit, I beseech thee, O God, to all, that profess thy Name ; that while there is so much Scandal in Division, and such severe Judgments threaten'd against the Promoters of it, all may study to compose Differences, and not widen them. Thou hast given sufficient Encouragement,

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368 S. Peter *and* S. Paul,
ment, in the Promise of a Blessing to
Peace makers ; may all, who desire thy
Blessing, seek it in the study of a Com-
mon Peace ; and by this Character may
all labor to give Proof of being the Dis-
ciples of Jesus.

S. Peter *and* S. Paul, June 29.

TH^{O'} both these Apostles seem to
have an equal share in this Festi-
val ; yet since the former only is the
Subject of a General Debate amongst
Christians, our present Discourse shall
be confin'd to him, in an Enquiry,
Whether he had the Priviledge of any
Dignity and Authority above the rest
of the Apostles : In which Matter the
H. Scripture, amongst others, affords
us these Arguments, in favor of the Af-
firmative.

First, In the particular Name given
him by Christ, in reward of the Con-
fession of his Divinity ; *And I say to thee,*
that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I
will build my Church, Mat. 16. 18. This
Name imports a particular Prerogative,
of being a Rock, and the Foundation
of

of that Building, which Christ was to raise, his Church. And S. Jerome, in his Paraphrase upon this Text, says 'That, as when Christ call'd his Apostles the Light of the World, and Salt of the Earth, he communicated to them Spiritual Qualities answerable to such Names: So also, when he gave to Simon the Name of Peter, or Rock, it was not *sermone cassa* & *nullum habente opus*; not with an Empty Word, which has no force or efficacy in it, but making him to be what he call'd him; so that according to the Metaphor of a Rock, it is rightly and properly said to Peter; *Ædificabo Ecclesiam meam super te*; I will build my Church upon thee: Thus this Father reasons, as S. Paul had done in another Case, who made this Argument to prove, that Christ transcended the Angels in the Excellency of his Nature; because he had obtain'd a more Excellent Name than they, Heb. i. 4. Now if there be any strength in this Reasoning; upon the same it may be justly press'd, that, whereas Christ said to Simon only, and to no other of his Apostles; *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church*: He communicated to him some singular Prerogative, in which he excell'd all his Brethren.

This seems to be the Sense of the Apostles themselves, at least; after the Coming of the Holy Ghost, in the several Registers left of their Names; in which, tho' the rest of the Apostles are never nam'd in Order; yet *Peter* is every where set in the Head of the Catalogue, which cannot be imputed to Chance, or to the Will of the Writer; for then his Name might have been differently placed like the rest, but to the Direction of the Holy Ghost, and the Appointment of Christ, which no Evangelist could alter. Neither could this be for the sake of Order only; for what reason could there be for so much exactness in One, and in none of the Rest? If Twelve are to be number'd, and all are Equal, what signifies the Ceremony of setting One always in the Head? Why should S. *Matthew* give him the Title of *Primus*, *Mat. 10. 2.* *The First Simon, who is call'd Peter.* If he had been first call'd by Christ, or first in Age, there might have been some color for it; but as it was, there can be no better reason for this Exactness observ'd by the Evangelists, than that *Peter* was First in Order, because he was First in Dignity and Authority among them; and so 'tis expounded by the

the Fathers of the First Ages, who give him the Titles of Prince, Chief, Head and Greatest of the Apostles.

This is confirm'd from the Solemn Promise made by Christ to S. Peter, and to him alone; that he would give him the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; *Tibi dabo Claves regni Cælorum: To thee will I give the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, Mat. 16. 19.* And what could this be, but the Supreme Power and Authority of Governing his Church; since the Word *Keys*, not only in Scripture phrase, but from the general Acceptation, and even Practice of the World, signifies that Superiority or Supreme Power, with which a Person is invested, to govern a Family, City or Kingdom; and the Delivery of the Keys is a Delivery of such Power? And tho' the Power of Binding and Losing, which is an Effect of the Keys, was promis'd to all the Apostles; yet 'tis not read in Scripture, that the Keys themselves, the proper Token and Badge of the Supreme Stewardship over the Church, were promis'd to the rest, but to Peter alone. And when was this Promise fulfill'd, but a little before Christ's Ascension into Heaven, when after a
Second

Second Confession, how much he lov'd him, he gave him Power, and this in the Presence of the Disciples, to Feed, not only his Lambs, but his Sheep, in which are included all the Faithful, of what Degree or Pre-eminence soever?

That this whole Exposition of Scripture relating to *S. Peter*, may not seem Arbitrary or New, I will add here the Sentiments of the Ancient and most Eminent Fathers in Christ's Church, upon this Subject. *S. Cyril of Alexandria*, l. 2. in *Joan*. c. 12. Christ foretels *Peter*, that his Name shall be no longer *Simon*, but *Peter*: Very fitly intimating by that Name, that he intended to Build his Church upon him, as upon a Rock and most firm Stone. And again, l. 12. c. 64. *Peter* first cries out, as the Prince and Head of the rest; thou art Christ the Son of the Living God.

S. Basil ad c. 2. Isa. By this Word *Peter*, we understand the Son of *Jonas*, who because he excell'd the rest in Faith, had the Church built upon him.

S. Cyprian ep. 69. There *Peter* speaks, upon whom the Church was built. And *ep. 40.* God is One, One Christ, One Church, and One Chair founded upon

upon *Peter* by the Word of Christ. *And ep. 73.* Christ gave this Power first to *Peter*, upon whom he built his Church, and from whence he instituted and declar'd the Origin of Unity.

S. Chrysostom. Ho. 2. de Pœnit. in Ps. 50. Did not *Peter*, that Pillar of the Church, that Foundation of the Faith, that Head of the Apostles, deny his Master Three several times? *And Hom. 3. in Act.* How Zealous is *Peter*! How, Sensible, that the Flock was committed to his Charge by Christ! How does he shew himself the Chief in this Council! — He being Chief of all, with Reason uses Authority in this Affair, as having them all in his Power. For Christ says to him; Do you being Converted confirm your Brethren. *And l. 2. de Sacerd. c. 1.* For what Reason did Christ shed his Blood? Certainly, to gain those Sheep, the Care of which he committed to *Peter* and his Successors.

S. Ambrose l. 10. in Luc. ad c. 24. Christ did not doubt, neither did he ask to learn, but to teach, who it was he would leave behind him, as Vicar of his Love. — Because he alone amongst all confesses Christ, he is preferr'd before all. — He commands him to feed his

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his Sheep, that so, he being the more Perfect, might govern those, that are more Perfect.

S. Jerome. l. 1. ad v. Pel. c. 4. As Plato was Prince of the Philosophers, so was Peter of the Apostles, upon whom the Church of Christ was firmly built. And l. 1. ad v. Jovin. c. 14. You affirm, that the Church is founded upon Peter; altho' in another Place it is said to be built upon all the Apostles, and that all of them receiv'd the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and have the Church establish'd equally upon them; nevertheless, One of the Twelve is chosen, to the End, that a Head being appointed, the Occasion of Schism may be taken away.

S. Augustin. in Ps. 69. Peter, who a little before confess'd Christ to be the Son of God, and upon that Profession had been call'd the Rock, on which the Church was to be built, soon after, when our Lord was speaking of what he was to suffer, replied, Far be it from thee, Lord. And l. 2. de Bapt. tom. Don. c. 1. he quotes these Words of S. Cyprian: For neither Peter, who was the First Chosen by our Lord, and upon whom he built his Church, did any thing insolently take upon him, when

Paul

Paul argued with him concerning the Circumcision, or arrogantly tell him, that he held the Primacy, and that he ought to be obey'd by New Converts. Then goes on: Behold, where *Cyprian* recounts, as we have likewise learnt from the H. Scriptures, how the Apostle *Peter*, in whom the Primacy of the Apostles is so eminently resplendent, being urg'd to treat with the Jews about Circumcision otherwise than Truth requir'd, was reprehended by *Paul*. And a little after. I am of Opinion, that, without any Injury, *Cyprian* the Bishop may be compar'd in point of Martyrdom, to the Apostle *Peter*. Yet I ought to be afraid of undervaluing *Peter*; for who is there, that does not know, that that Headship of the Apostles is more Excellent than any Bishopric?

In these Words do these Eminent Lights of Christ's Church deliver their Sense of this Point. In which these Two Particulars are evident; that they had read the same Texts of Scripture above-cited, of what Christ speaks to *Peter*; and understood by them, that Christ gave to *Peter*, not only a Primacy of Order, but built his Church upon him, committed the Charge

Charge of the whole Flock to him, gave him Power answerable to this Charge, for the Preservation of Unity in the whole Body.

Now this is not so to be understood, as to exclude Christ from being the Rock and Foundation, on which the Church is built; for as he is the Head and Corner-stone, so is he the Foundation too; but only, that he appointed *Peter* the Ministerial Head, and left him the Commission of Superintendency over the Church, for the Prevention of Schisms, and Preservation of Unity, without which the Church could not subsist. As therefore in the Civil Government, Christ being Supreme Governor does not excluded a Supreme Visible Head, so neither in the Church.

Neither does it exclude the other Apostles from being the Foundations of the Church, in as much as they receiv'd Power from Christ of Preaching the Gospel, and Founding Churches throughout the World; and had the Power of the Keys given them, in which *S. Cyprian* and other Fathers say, they were all Equal; but only, that, as the Church was, by Christ's Appointment, to be One, so the Origin of Unity should be in One,

One, and a Power left with that One to answer the End of the Institution in the Preservation of Unity. This seems the Sense of S. Cyprian, who puts the Objection, and answers it: *Quamvis Apostolis omnibus, post Resurrectionem suam, parempotestatem tribuat, —tamen, ut unitatem manifestaret, unitatis ejusdem Originem ab Uno incipientem sua auctoritate disposuit. l. de Unit. Eccl.*

Neither does it set S. Peter above all Reproof, if he does what is notoriously reprovably: And hence 'tis no wonder, S. Paul withstood him, *Gal. 2. 11*. For whatever the Power be, if it does not exempt from Oversight or Sin, it cannot be an Exemption from Reproof; and how often is this from an Inferior?

Neither does this suppose, but these Words of Christ; *Upon this Rock I will build my Church*, may be understood of S. Peter's Faith, and the Confession of Christ's Divinity; for since this Confession of his was the Motive, why Christ gave this Preference to Peter; the Church may be truly said to be built upon his Faith; and so 'tis generally express'd by all the Fathers after the Council of Nice, who knowing, how much the Defence of the Catholic

tholic Cause, against the *Arians*, depended upon this Confession of *Peter*, were not wanting in their Commendations of it; especially, since in this Sense, they might prosecute the *Arians*, as Persons, that endeavor'd to overthrow the very Foundation of the Church. But since this Exposition was particularly taken up against the *Arians*, and the other was more Primitive, as may be seen in *Tertullian*, *Origen* and *Cyprian*, and they do not interfere with one another, the allowing this does not exclude *Peter* from being the Person, on which Christ built his Church; any more than it excludes *Peter* from being the Instrument of curing the Lame Man at the Temple-gate, because he told him, it was not he and *John*, by their own Power had made him Walk, but the *Faith*, which is by Jesus Christ.

But that I may not transgress, let us turn now to God, and give him Thanks for all the Mercies of Jesus Christ in the Establishment of his Church, with an Acknowledgment, that whatever he ordain'd for the Preservation of its Unity, was to us an incomprehensible Blessing of Peace. Let us beg Grace, never to make void the Designs of his Goodness, by too positive an Adhesion to the Pri-
vate

vare Opinions; but that with an entire freedom of Spirit, we may surrender our selves to his Conduct; and upon this Submission, lay the Hopes of coming at length to his Promises.

S. James, *July 25.*

ON Last Holy-day, we made some Enquiry into the Manner, how Christ Founded his Church, and what Order he left for its Government, and preserving it in Unity; and both from the Words of Scripture, and the Exposition of them, given by the Primitive Fathers, the best Commentators of Holy Writ, found sufficient Motives for believing, that Christ built his Church not only on *Peter's* Faith, but on his Person, in recompence of his Faith, and appointed him the Substitute or Minister of his Power over the whole Flock, for removing of Schisms, and the preservation of its general Unity and Peace. Now we are to take one Step farther, and enquire, whether there be any reason to believe, that this was only a Temporary Ordinance restrain'd to his Person, and the Time of the

the Apostles; or whether the Power given to him was design'd as an Inheritance to his Successors, for answering the Purposes of the First Institution.

In this Question we cannot expect much assistance from the Words of Scripture, because this gives no account of things beyond the time of the Apostles, nor even so far. But however, since S. Paul says, *That Christ has set some in the Church, first Apostles, then Prophets, &c. for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all meet in the Unity of Faith, that we be not like Children, carry'd about with every wind of Doctrine,* Eph. 4. 11. This gives sufficient Motive to conclude, that as the Church was instituted by Christ, so it was to continue to the end of the World; especially as to all that was necessary for the support of the Body, and preserving its Unity; and consequently, that, as in the other Apostles, so in Peter, the Power given by Christ, was to be deriv'd to their Successors; for otherwise the Body could not subsist.

This Reason farther consider'd, will give light to the Question: For, if this was the Principal Means to prevent Schisms and Dissentions in the Primitive Church,

Church, when the Graces of God were far more abundant and eminent than now they are ; nay, if the Twelve were not like to agree, except there had been One Chief among them ; for, says *S. Jerome*, among the Twelve, One was therefore chosen, that a Chief being appointed, occasion of Dissention might be prevented ; how can it be thought, that Equality would keep all the Pastors in the World in Peace and Unity ? For in all Societies, Authority (which cannot be, where all are Equal) must procure Unity and Obedience. For tho' the several Kingdoms of several Princes, make each of them an Absolute and Several Common-wealth ; yet the several Congregations, dispers'd throughout several Kingdoms, do all of them make but One Spiritual Common-wealth, and Church of Christ, oblig'd in Duty, to the Belief and Profession of One and the Same Faith. Now how can the Divided Members of the Church, thus dispers'd in several Kingdoms and Nations, be govern'd, unless some One have Authority over them all ? If this were not, Christ's Church would be in a far worse case, than the meanest Common-wealth ; nay, almost, than a Den of Thieves ; if it were left destitute

destitute of Means, either to convince Heresies, or suppress them. Since therefore God would have One Catholic Church throughout the World, it was necessary he should chuse some One Father of his People, to whom, and to whose Successors, the whole World should belong, and be One Sheep-fold; and by this Means, out of all Nations, however infinitely disagreeing in Manners, should be made One Church.

Again; there is the same reason for a Universal Pastor, or Supreme Head on Earth, over all other Pastors and Churches, as there is for a National Pastor or Primate in any Kingdom. For if this be necessary, that the whole National Church, consisting of Provinces, and divided into Diocesses, may be maintain'd Uniform in Worship; that there be no Divisions, Schism, Heresies, Contempts, Irregular Proceedings among Pastors and People; the same Necessity there is for a Universal Pastor: Because whoever considers what the Church of Christ is, must from the Essential Notion of it, see the same Necessity of Uniting National Churches in the Catholic or Universal Church, as there is for Uniting Provinces

vinces and Diocesses in a National Church; and consequently that the Necessity is Equal, for a Universal Pastor, as for a National, or Primate. For by how much the more Universal the Church is, by so much the more Universal the Pastoral Charge and Jurisdiction must be: And as the National Church is to the Universal Visible Church; so the National Pastor to the Universal Pastor, by a Mathematical Proportion. And the like ground of Relation, as is betwixt a National Pastor, and a National Church, consisting of Diocesses and Provinces, is also betwixt an Oecumenical Pastor and an Oecumenical Church, consisting of Nations. And if Unity, Uniformity, and Regular Administration of Church-Government be indispensibly necessary in a National Church, and the Care of these things to be committed primarily and principally to a National Pastor; how much more is it necessary in the Catholic Church, constituted and made up of National Churches; the Care of which to be committed to an Oecumenical or Catholic Pastor? And if the Schism of a Province or Diocess, be of so dangerous consequence to a National Church; of how much more danger.

dangerous will the Schism be of a National to the Catholic Church?

Hence it follows, that as many, who maintain the Government of the Church by Bishops, Arch-Bishops and Primates, must also own a Universal Visible Pastor, and this from the very Nature or Essence of the Catholic Visible Church. Because it must be own'd, either an Organized or Unorganized Body, that is, made up of disagreeing Parts, which have no communion with one another. This latter cannot be allow'd by such Asserters, because of the gross Absurdities tending to Separation and Phanaticism, that must necessarily follow upon such a Concession. If they say it is an Organized Body, which is most suitable to the Order of the Catholic Church, and to the Wisdom of its Founder, that it should be made up of the most curious Texture, and the most proportionate Adaptation of Parts; it is by no means to be suppos'd, that a Visible Body, eminent in all other Parts, should want a Visible Head; an Invisible Headship only to a Visible, Organized, Living Body, cannot in this Sense be allow'd, nor a Secular Headship to this Spiritual Body.

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Hitherto from Reason, considering the Nature of Christ's Church, which being One Body, must have in it that Authority, which is necessary for its Unity. And now if we look back to the Primitive Times, we shall find Motives for believing, that the Ancient Christians acknowledg'd such an Authority, and that the Successor of S. Peter was vested with it.

S. Optatus Milevit. l. 2. adv. Parm.
Thou canst not deny, but thou know'st that the Episcopal Chair was first erected at Rome by Peter, in which Peter sat the Head of the Apostles; for which reason he was also call'd *Cephas*; that in this One Chair, Unity might be preserv'd amongst all; and that the other Apostles might not every one maintain other Seats for themselves, in opposition to this. So that he would be a Schismatic and Sinner, whoever should set up another Chair against this One. -- In this sits *Siricius*, who is at this Day our Contemporary, with whom we and the whole World hold Communion by Circular Epistles, and agree as One Body.

S. Gregory Naz. de Creat. Ep. Doar.
Writes thus of the Bishop of Rome. We do not condemn or revile that Great
R Pastor,

Pastor, who governs that Magnificent City. We know him to be Honorable, we acknowledge him Head, we stile him Holy, notwithstanding the Injury we suffer; only we desire he will shew himself an Indulgent and Tender Father to his Children, and diligently take care of the whole Church.

S. Athanasius Apol. 2. Applying himself to Julius Bishop of Rome, relates the Letter writ by Julius to the Arian Bishops: Are you ignorant, that according to the receiv'd Custom, you ought first to have writ to us, that hence, what was Just might have been determin'd? If therefore any such Suspicion had been conceiv'd of a Bishop, it ought to have been referr'd hither, to our Church.—What you have done, was neither the Ordinance of Paul, nor taught you by the Fathers.—I signifie nothing to you, but what we have receiv'd from the Blessed Apostle Peter.

S. Chrysostom, l. 2. de Sacerd. c. 1. For what reason did Christ shed his Blood? Certainly to gain those Sheep, the care of which he committed to Peter, and his Successors. And in Libell. Supp. presented to Innocentius I. Bishop of Rome, he desires him to repeal the Sen-

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tence pass'd against him by Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, and other Arian Bishops, in a Synod. Write, says he, and by our Authority declare, that what they have thus unjustly done, when I was absent, and never refusing to appear, is void. Subject them to the Censure of the Church, who have been thus presumptuous. And since I am Innocent, having nothing prov'd against me, and found guilty of no Crime; command that I be again restor'd to my See.

S. Jerom. Ep. 57. to Pope Damasus, I demand a Protection of this your Sheep: I speak to the Successor of the Fisherman, to the Disciple of the Cross. I follow no other Leader but Christ, am in Communion with your Holiness, that is, with the Chair of Peter. Upon that Rock I know the Church is built. Whoever eats the Lamb out of this House, is prophane. Whoever is not in the Ark of Noah, shall perish in the Flood.—I know not Vitalis, I reject Meletius, I do not own Paulinus; whoever does not gather with you, scatters; that is, he that is not of Christ, is Antichrist's. And while these three unhappy Factions in the East, endeavor'd each to gain him to their Party; he cries out to
R 2 them,

them, *Siquis Cathedra Petri iungitur, meus est*: Let me know, which of you holds Communion with the Chair of Peter, and him I shall acknowledge for mine. Ep. 3. 8.

S. Augustin cont. part. Donat. Reckon up the Priests even in the Chair of Peter; and in that List of Fathers, see the Order of Succession. That is the Rock, against which the Gates of Hell shall never prevail. And ep. 92. to Pope Innocent, in the Name of the Council of Milevis in Africa. Since it has pleas'd God, by his special Grace to seat you in the Chair Apostolic, and so to qualifie you in these our Times, that it would be a Crime in us, not to lay before you, what is for the Church's Interest,— We do beseech you to use your Care of Pastor in looking after the infirm Members of Christ. For a New Heresie is lately broach'd— But we Hope by the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who helps you in the discharge of your Duty, and hears your Prayers, that the Abettors of this pernicious Doctrine will submit to the Authority of your Holiness, which Authority is deriv'd to you by the Authority of the Holy Scripture.

The Council of Ephesus owns this Authority.

ty in the Bishop of Rome, whilst the Fathers there assembled say they pronounce Sentence against Nestorius, oblig'd by the Holy Canons and the Epistle of their Holy Father Celestin, Bishop of Rome. Act. 1. And Act. 2. He is stil'd in full Assembly, their Holy Head, the Successor of Peter, who was the Head of the Apostles, and Foundation of the Catholic Church.

Likewise the Council of Chalcedon. Act. 1. In as much as the Accusation against Dioscorus was, that having no Authority to judge, he presum'd and durst Convocate a Synod, without the Authority of the See Apostolic, which was ever Unlawful, and without Precedent: *Quod nunquam licuit, nunquam factum est.* And his Crime is thus declar'd by the Council to Pope Leo: That his Fury spar'd not him, to whom the Care of the Vineyard was committed by Christ, that is, your Holiness. *Insuper & contra ipsam, cui Vineæ custodi a Salvatore commissæ est, extendit insaniam, id est, contra eam quoq; Apostolicam Sanctitatem.*

This may suffice, out of much more that might be added, to shew what was the Sense of the Primitive Church, as to this Question. And now if this

whole Matter be duly consider'd;
First, As to the Reasons above-men-
tion'd, which are not mine, but bor-
row'd from Learned Men, not of our
Commission. *2dly*, As to these Testi-
monies of Antiquity, shewing Ap-
plications made to the Apostolic See,
in Causes Ecclesiastical, from *Constan-*
tinople, from *Antioch*, from *Alexandria*,
from *Africa*, and the Power of deci-
ding them, with the Care of the whole
Flock, acknowledg'd, both by the
most Eminent Prelates and Antient
Councils; must it not be confess'd,
that the Council of *Florence* had suf-
ficient grounds to declare, that the
See Apostolic and *Roman* Bishop has
the Primacy over the whole World;
that he is the Successor of *S. Peter*,
Prince of the Apostles, true Vicar of
Christ, Head of the whole Church,
the Father and Doctor of all Christi-
ans; and that there was given to him,
in blessed *Peter*, by our Lord Jesus
Christ, a full Power of feeding, ruling
and governing the Universal Church,
according to the Acts of General Coun-
cils and the Holy Canons?

And if this Definition (which only
is of Faith in this Matter) be consid-
er'd alone, abstracted from School

Opinions,

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Opinions, which are not of Faith; as, that the Pope is Infallible in himself: That he is above a General Council: That he has an Indirect Authority over the Temporal Power of Princes. If it be consider'd farther, as *Grotius* observes; how ready the Remedies are in *France* and *Spain*, to retain the Pope from invading the Rights either of the Kings or Bishops: Moreover, that the King of *Great Britain*, as he says, enjoys no Power concerning things and Persons Ecclesiastical, which the King of *Sicily* has not also. *Judgm. of Rel.* If I say, what is requir'd as a Term of Communion, were duly consider'd, separate from Opinions and Scandals, I cannot but think, it might be consented to by all moderate Men, as a Doctrine grounded on Scripture conformable to the Ancient Canons, and necessary for the Beauty and Order of the Universal Church.

O God, do thou inspire all Christians with the desire of Peace; Grant, they may weigh all things with a Spirit above the Influence of Prejudice, Passion or Interest; these are nowhere tolerated, but with Injustice; how desperate then must the Cause of Truth be, where these have the Management?

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agement? Deliver all Christians from these Evils; and may they judge of Truth, with the Indifferency, that ought to be on the Bench.

S. Ann, July 26.

ON this Day, the Subject of our Discourse shall be of *Tradition*; of which our Profession of Faith has these Words: *Apostolicas & Ecclesiasticas Traditiones firmissime admitto & amplector.* I steadfastly admit, and embrace *Apostolical and Ecclesiastical Traditions.*

By Apostolical Traditions are meant such Doctrines and Ordinances, as were deliver'd by the Apostles, and, without being committed to Writing, were receiv'd by the Church, and by its continual Belief or Practice, have been convey'd thro' all Ages down to us. That there were Doctrines deliver'd by the Apostles without Writing; and likewise, that such Doctrines were steadfastly to be admitted and embrac'd by the Faithful, is the express Word of Scripture: *Therefore, Brethren, stand fast, and hold the Traditions, which ye have been taught, whether by Word or our Epistle,*

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Epistle, 2 Thes. 2. 15. The things, that thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also, 2 Tim. 2. 2. S. Paul writ many things to the Corinthians, appointing and reforming as he found Necessary; and of many other things he mention'd nothing in Writing, but adjourned the speaking of them, till he should come amongst them: And the rest I will set in Order, when I come, 1 Cor. 11. 34. So likewise S. John; Having many things to write to you, I would not write with Paper and Ink; but I trust to come to you, and speak Face to Face, that our Joy may be full, 2 John 12. I had many things to write; but I will not with Ink and Pen write to thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak Face to Face, 3 John 13. In which Words are distinguish'd two ways of delivering the Sacred Truth; one by Writing, the other by Word of Mouth; and the Command of the Apostle is, that the Faithful hold fast the Doctrine, whether it be delivered one way or the other. Matter of Fact then is recorded in Scripture, that the Apostles taught many things without Writing; and the Will of God is manifest in Scripture, that what was

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thus taught by the Apostles, was to be believ'd and held fast by the Faithful, as well as that, which they left in Writing. If it was the Will of God, that the Unwritten Word should be held fast, then it was the Will of God, that it should be retain'd by the Pastors of the Church, and the Faithful, and taught to following Generations; for to the Apostle expressly requires of Timothy; *That thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to Faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also.* Then the Church, which has held fast this Unwritten Word, and taught it, and deliver'd it down to following Generations, has in this done according to the express Will of God, and to his positive Command recorded in Scripture: And those, who refusing to receive what has been thus taught and deliver'd, have endeavor'd to stifle it, have in so doing acted contrary to the Will of God, and to the express Command of the Written Word.

That this Exposition may be Vindicated from the Imputation of Novelty, let us appeal to the Fathers of the Primitive Church, and hear their Judgment upon the Point. *S. Irenaeus l. 3. adv. Her. c. 8.* No one ought to search for

for the Truth among others, which it is easie to receive from the Church; the Apostles having abundantly stor'd up in her, as in a rich Treasury, all things, that are of Truth: So that every one, that will, may from her receive the Water of Life. For she is the Entrance into Life; and all others are Thieves and Robbers; wherefore these indeed are to be avoided; but those things, which are of the Church, we are to embrace with the greatest Diligence, and lay hold on the Tradition of Truth. What if the Apostles had left us no Scripture; ought we not to follow the order of Tradition, which they deliver'd to those, to whom they committed the Care of the Churches?

Origen in Pref. l. 1. Peri. Because there are many, who perswade themselves, they believe aright concerning Christ, and some of them teach differently from those, that went before us; yet the Doctrine of the Church deliver'd down by the Order of Succession from the Apostles, and to this present remaining in the Churches, is preserv'd: That Truth alone is to be believ'd; which in nothing disagrees from Ecclesiastical Tradition. *And in Mat. 23.* He says of Hereticks expound-

ing the Scripture; we are not to give Credit to them, nor Forsake the First and Ecclesiastical Tradition, nor Believe otherwise, than as the Churches of God have successively deliver'd down to us.

S. Basil. l. de Sp. S. c. 27. Amongst the Doctrines and Ordinances, which are Preach'd in the Church, some we have from the Written Word, and others we have receiv'd from the Tradition of the Apostles, in a Mystery, that is, in Secret: both which equally conduce to Piety. Nor will any deny this, that has experienc'd never so little the Ecclesiastical Rights. For if we once begin to throw by, as inconsiderable, such Practices, as are not deliver'd in Writing, our Imprudence will highly prejudice the Gospel, or rather reduce the very Preaching of Faith to nothing but a meer Name. *Then having number'd up many Observations of the Church, which are not in Scripture, he adds, c. 22.* We have many other Mysteries, acknowledged Authentic, without any thing of Writing to support them: For I doubt not, 'tis conform to the Doctrine of the Apostles, to embrace Traditions not written.

S. Gregory Nys. l. 3. cont. Eunom. Let it

it be known, that it's a sufficient Proof of our Doctrin, that we have receiv'd it by Tradition from our Ancestors; it having been left us as a kind of an Inheritance by the Apostles, and convey'd down to us by a continu'd Succession of the Faithful in all Ages.

S. Epiphanius Her. 61. 'Tis necessary to admit of Tradition; for all things cannot be found in Scripture. And therefore the Holy Apostles deliver'd some things in Writing, and some by Tradition. Which is affirm'd by *S. Paul*, where he says; *As I have deliver'd to you.* And in another Place; *So I teach, and so I have deliver'd in the Churches.*

S. Augustin. l. 4. de Bapt. What is observ'd by the whole Church, never decreed in Councils, but always maintain'd, is justly believ'd to have been instituted by the Apostles. *And l. 5.* The Apostles left no Command touching this Matter, but that Practice, which was oppos'd against *Cyprian*, is to be believ'd, to have been deriv'd from their Tradition. As there are many things observ'd throughout the whole Church, and therefore justly look'd on as commanded by the Apostles, tho' they are no where found in Writing.

Writing. *And ep. 112. ad Jan.* But those things, which we and the whole World observe, without any Authority of Writing, but only of Tradition, 'tis to be understood, were commended and appointed to be retain'd either by the Apostles or General Councils, whose Authority is very great in the Church.

S. Chrysostome. Ho. 4. in ep. 2. ad Thes. Upon these Words of the Apostle, *Hold fast the Traditions, which you have learned,* says, Hence it is manifest, that the Apostles have not deliver'd all in their Epistles; but many things also without Writing, which are likewise to be believ'd. Let us therefore esteem the Tradition of the Church worthy of Credit. It is a Tradition; enquire no farther.

This is the general Language of the Fathers upon this Subject, in which they are so express, as Occasion offers, that, none, who have a due Veneration for their Antiquity, Piety and Learning, can bring this Matter into question. And hence while, this Profession of our Faith, of holding fast Apostolical and Ecclesiastical Traditions, is so conformable to the Scripture, and to the Primitive Church, I cannot think, this can be any Matter of Difference

rence with those, who Appeal to both these, as the best Rule of their Faith. Neither can I apprehend, how any can except against it, since there is no Congregation of Christians whatever, but what in Fact own it, both in Faith and Disciplin, by believing and observing many things, which have no other Authority, but of Tradition. All believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and such Particular Books to be Canonical; and what Authority have they, at this time, for this Belief, but only Tradition; because they have been so receiv'd and deliver'd down to us by the Church? The Creed is receiv'd, as fram'd by the Apostles, and an Authentic Symbol of Faith: Whence have we this, but by Tradition, because it has been so deliver'd? The *Sunday* is generally observ'd and kept Holy, tho' the Commandments positively require the Sanctification of the *Saturday*: Whence is the Authority of this Change, for annulling the Determination of the Divine Law, but from Tradition? All generally believe it Lawful to Eat Blood and strangl'd Meats; tho' it be expressly forbid by the Apostles, *Acts 15. 20.* Whence have we this, but from Tradition?

tion? The Consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and the Procession of the Holy Ghost from Father and Son, is generally believ'd, and has Place in our Creeds; and whence have we this Positive Determination, but from Tradition? As to all Forms of Public or Private Prayer; the Particular Manner, and Ceremonies, and Prayers in Administring the Sacraments, in Ordination and Burials, in appointing Fasts and Holy-days, in the greatest part of Church Disciplin, in the Division of Diocesses and Parishes, in the Subordination of Pastors, in Baptizing Infants, in Church-men not being of some Handicraft Trade, in the Distinction of their Habit, in giving the Sacrament in the Church, Fasting, Kneeling, and not Sitting at a Table after Supper, in putting the Psalms into Rhime, with infinit other Particulars; what positive Authority is for these, besides Tradition? Take away this, and let the whole Matter be duly weigh'd, and I question not, but, as S. Gregory observes, the Preaching of Faith will be reduced to a meer Name.

But now while I plead for Tradition, I do not in this pretend to justify all
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Traditions; neither does the Church require our Approbation of them. Hence as to all such Traditions, like those of the Pharisees, which are either Repugnant to the Law of God, or Frivolous and Unprofitable to Piety and true Worship, or are nothing but Vain and Superstitious Observations, and therefore may be call'd the *Traditions of Men*, the Church no where recommends them, but requires all to look upon them with the Contempt they deserve. Our Submission is demanded to none but Apostolical and Ecclesiastical Traditions, such, as have been receiv'd from the *Apostles*, or have been the Ordinances of the *Church*; and of what Authority these ought to be, the Scripture and Fathers teach so positively, in requiring Obedience and Submission, that the Contempt of them cannot be separated from the Contempt of God, who has put them over us.

But how can it be known what Traditions are Apostolical? The Fathers above-cited give some directions for this; which being summ'd up by *Grotius*, I will repeat his Words: *First*, It is a Just Presumption, those things were deliver'd from the Apostles, which are every where found in the Churches, and

and whereof any other Original does not appear.

2dly, If there be some Pious Witnesses, Wise, and of great Authority in the Church, who affirm a thing, as deliver'd from the Apostles, we have now so great a Proof, as is in this Matter sufficient, nor less than that, by which we discern the Apostolical Writings, from those, that are not Apostolical. What they found in the Church, they held; what they learned, they taught; what they received from their Fathers, they deliver'd to their Children, saith *Augustin*. A Mathematical Certitude is not requir'd in all things. If one be pertinacious, he will as easily find escapes against the Book, as against the Tradition. But it became the Divine Providence to take care, that neither the Books in Matters of Moment, nor the Tradition should be adulterated; and that it has perform'd. Why then did not the Apostles write what they had deliver'd? Because they writ, as Occasion was offer'd, and as the time requir'd, not a System of Doctrine and Government. What things pertain'd to the Regiment and the Peace of the Churches, were indeed written in Great Letters, in the conspicuous use of

of those Churches, which were Founded by the Apostles, *Judgm. of Rel.*

This is agreeable to what the Antient Fathers taught, and must be so far acknowledg'd even by the most Precise Retrenchers; as to confess, that many things of those which they yet retain and practice, have no other Authority for being Apostolical than this. No Religion can subsist, that wholly lays by Tradition; and how then can it be reasonable to declaim against Tradition, and yet to retain things that have no other Title? The only thing I propose, is, That those Particulars be examin'd, which have been laid by, as the Inventions of Men, by Modern Congregations, and be compar'd with what they yet retain; and that they would equally approve, what has equal Authority to support it. And if they find in us (as they may) a Desire of laying by all that, which has not as good Authority for it, as the things, which they retain as most warrantable, I do not see, but there may be an Accommodation of this Point. O God, inspire all Christians with this good Disposition, that they may receive all those things, which carry thy Authority with them. The Apostles had thy
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Authority for what they taught and deliver'd; the Church has thy Authority for delivering the same, and likewise for governing the Flock, and judging what is convenient in the Administration of Church-Government, Discipline or Public Worship. If then we receive, what is thus deliver'd, we obey thy Ordinance; and Obstinacy here is Disobedience to thee, and the ready way to overthrow the best Institutions, even thy own, and to let in Confusion, where thou hast commanded Unity and Peace.

S. Lawrence, *August 10.*

ON this Day the Subject of our Discourse shall be, of Praying for the Souls of the Faithful departed, and of Purgatory. To prepare for this, I must declare what our Church teaches. *First*, That all such as keep the Commandments, and die so in the State of Grace, as to be free from the Guilt of Sin, and from all Punishment due to it, at their departure out of this Life, go immediately to Heaven. *2dly*, That such as live wickedly, and die without Repentance,

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tance, at their departure go forthwith to Hell. And here the Question comes, Whether it can be reasonably apprehended, that These Two Sorts include all Mankind: That all are either so very Good, as to go immediately to Heaven; or so very Wicked, as to be cast into Hell?

There seems reason enough to fear, there are but very Few of the Former Sort; that is, so very Perfect, as to be forthwith translated from this Vale of Misery, to the Possession of God: And as for all those who come not up to this Perfection, are they all so very Wicked, as to be cast forth into Utter Darkness? We hope, that amongst Christians, there are many of another Degree, who, tho' not so very Good and Perfect, as to be immediately receiv'd into Bliss, are not however so very Wicked, as to be eternally banish'd from the Sight of God, and damn'd for ever. For what shall we say of all those, who carefully avoiding all grievous Sin, as being truly desirous to save their Souls, are yet subject to many Imperfections; as to some Neglect on their Prayers, some Light and Sudden Passions of Impatience, Anger, or other Evils of Inadvertency, which
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may be term'd rather the Consequences of a Natural Weakness, than Wilful Offences? What shall we say of this Rank of Christians, if they die without a Just Repentance, as it often happens to many, who are taken off suddainly, or by such Distempers, which seizing the Head, deprive them of all Means of making their Peace with God? It seems not consistent with the Mercy of God, for such Trespasses of Weakness or Inadvertency found in his Children, to cast them out of his Sight for ever; and therefore Hell can have no claim in them: And yet they are not in a State of going immediately to Heaven; because dying under the guilt of these Offences, tho' light, their Souls are so far Polluted; and the Scripture declares the Will of God in this Case, that nothing that is Polluted or Defil'd, can enter into Heaven; *There shall in no wise enter into it any thing, that defileth, Rev. 21. 27.* Therefore they must be deposited for a time, in some Third Place, till by suffering, they satisfy the Justice of God, and thus be purified from the guilt of those Imperfections, in which they departed this Life, and so be prepar'd for Heaven.

Thus

Thus we divide Christians into Three Ranks: *First*, The very Good. *2dly*, The very Wicked. *3dly*, A Middle Sort, which are neither so very Good, and yet not Wicked; and this grounded upon Scripture; which likewise gives farther Authority to that, which is most called in question, by shewing some Sins to be forgiven in the Life to come; which cannot be understood of the very Good, who go immediately to Heaven, because there no Sin has entrance; nor of the very Wicked, who go to Hell, because that is no Place for Forgiveness or Redemption; and consequently it must be understood of a Third State.

That there are some Sins forgiven in the Life to come, is shewn, *First*, In *2 Macch. 12. 43.* where *Judas Macchabeus* sends Money to *Jerusalem*, that a Sacrifice might be offer'd for the Sins of those that were dead; *Offerri pro peccatis mortuorum Sacrificium*: And where it is declar'd to be a Holy and Pious Thought to pray for the Dead, *that they may be deliver'd from their Sins*. Now tho' these Books are not receiv'd, as Canonical by all; yet since their Authority was made use of in the Primitive Church, as by *Origen*, *S. Cyprian*, *Eusebius*, *Cæsariensis*,

sariensis. S. Gregory Naz. S. Ambrose: Since they were receiv'd by the *African*, by the *Eastern* and *Western* Church; since S. Jerom says they were read by the Church, and that the Church read nothing, but what was for the Edification of the People, and the Confirmation of Truth; it cannot be reasonably imagin'd, that there was any thing in these Books contrary to Piety, and to the Faith of the Church; and therefore, that this Doctrin was what was then believ'd.

2dly, In S. Matt. 12. 32. *Whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.* In which Words Chriſt ſuppoſes, there are ſome Sins forgiven in the next Life, tho' thoſe againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not: And ſo S. Chryſoſtom expounds this place of the *Gloſſa*, *ſc. dei. l. 21. c. 13. 24.* And it cannot be imagin'd, that ſo great a Pretence would faſten a Senſe upon Chriſt's Words, contrary to Faith, Piety, and the Belief of the Church.

3dly, In 1 Cor. 3. 15. *If any man's Work ſhall burn, he ſhall ſuffer loſs: but he himſelf ſhall be ſav'd; yet ſo as by Fire.* Which Words, tho' difficult and capable

ble of other Construction, yet may be understood, as hinting a Third Place, where there is Salvation, yet so as by Fire. And so *S. Augustin* seems to expound them, in *Ps. 37.* where he says, If they build Gold, Silver, Precious Stones, they would be out of danger of Both Fires; not only of that Eternal, which shall be the Everlasting Torment of the Wicked, but likewise of that Fire, which shall purifie those, who shall be sav'd by Fire.

Hitherto Scripture; now let the Fathers speak what was the Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive Church, and whether agreeable to this Explication of *H. Writ*, and to the Reason above given.

Tertullian l. 10. de Monach. c. 10. speaking of the Obligation of a Christian Widow, says, She prays for her Husband's Soul, and in the mean time Refreshment for himself, that he may have part in the future resurrection; and makes Oblations on the Anniversary Days of his Departure.

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we don't in vain Pray and give Alms for them. All this is the Ordinance of the Holy Ghost, who designs we should help one another. For see, he will be benefited by you, and you by him, being perswaded for his sake to some Charitable Work; where you are the occasion to him of his Salvation, and he to you, of your Charity; and you need not doubt, but it will be of good effect.

S. Jerome Ep. 26. *ad Pammach.* on the Death of his Wife. Other Husbands dress their Wives Tombs with Flowers, — But our Friend *Pammachius* pays no other Duty to the Holy Ashes, and Venerable Bones, but by giving Alms, cherishing them by this Sweet Odor; because he knows 'tis written; As Water extinguishes the Fire, so Alms blot out Sin.

S. Augustin, l. 9. Conf. c. 13. Prays thus for his Mother deceased: I know, she dealt mercifully, and from her Heart forgave to her Debtors their Trespases; do thou likewise remit her Debts, to her if She has also contracted some, in those many years she liv'd after Baptism. Forgive them, O Lord, forgive them, beseech thee. And *de cura pro mort.* c. 1. In the Books of *Macchabees* we read, that

Sacrifice was offer'd for the Dead. But if there were no such thing in the Old Scripture, yet the Authority of the whole Church, which is evident in this Practice, is of no small weight: Where among the Prayers said by the Priest at the Altar of God, the recommendation of the Dead is recited in its Place. *Again, Sermon. 32. de verb. Ap.* A Pompous Funeral is no advantage to the Dead — but as for the Prayers of the Holy Church, the Propitiatory Sacrifice and Alms, which are offer'd for their Souls, no doubt, but they are thereby aided, so as to be treated with greater Mercy, than their Sins deserv'd. For this, which has been deliver'd by the Fathers, the whole Church observes, when at the Sacrifice it self, the dead are in their place commemorated, to pray for all such as are departed in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and that it be remember'd, that the Sacrifice is likewise offer'd for them. — It is beyond all question, these things are beneficial to the Dead; but only to such, who so liv'd, as to be capable of receiving help from these things after their Death.

Thus speaks Antiquity; and now, besides the Evidence of a General Pra-

Since of Praying for the Dead, does not seem clear, that these Fathers supposed a Third State of Souls after this Life, Distinct from that of Heaven and Hell? For while in their Prayers for the Deceas'd, they Pray for Help, Relief, Comfort, Mercy and Pardon, they certainly suppose Souls to be in a State, where they both want all this Assistance, and are capable of receiving it. This cannot be in Heaven, where there is no want of Relief or Pardon; nor in Hell, because, tho' there be a want of all, there is no possibility of receiving it.

That this State of Souls can be in no degree of Glory, and consequently not in Heaven, seems necessarily to be own'd, not only because Heaven cannot receive any thing so far defil'd with Sin, as to stand in need of Pardon, or of being discharg'd of its Guilt, as the Fathers express it; but likewise because they suppose the Souls, for which they Pray, to be in a Suffering State. So *St. Augustin* expressly, *de civit. dei. l. 21.* In 24. where discoursing of such, as Die under the Guilt of light Sins, he says; *It is certain, that such being purg'd by Temporal Pains, which they suffer before the Day of Judgment, when they receive their*

their Bodies, shall not be condemn'd to Eternal Torments. In which Words, this Father owns a State of Christian Souls, dying with the Guilt of lighter Sins, and Suffering Temporal Pain for them in the next Life; yet so, as at the Last Day, not to be cast off with the Reprobate; which is a State very different from Hell, and every degree of Heaven; since in the one of these, there is no Suffering, and in the other, no Release. These Temporal Pains he mentions again *ib. c. 13.* Some, says he, suffer Temporal Punishment in this Life only; others after their Death; others both in this Life, and likewise in the next; but still before that Last and Terrible Judgment. Now these Temporal Pains being wholly Inconsistent with every degree of Bliss, this cannot be in Heaven, nor yet in Hell, where the Punishment is not Temporal, but Eternal; it necessarily implies a Third State, in which there is Suffering for Sin, but such as shall have an end.

Now this being the Doctrine of the Church, and founded both on Scripture and the Practice of the Universal and Primitive Church, I cannot think, but all those, who desire to Regulate their Faith by Scripture and the Pimi-

tive Church, may easily be reconcil'd to this Point, and not let in have any part in keeping up a Division, and breaking the Peace of the Church. For tho' the Word *Purgatory* has not the Authority of Scripture; yet since the Church does no more than by it express what has all the Authority that can be requir'd; there ought to be no more Exception against the Term, than against those of *Trinity*, *Sacrament*, or *Consubstantial*, which all generally make use of to express their Belief, tho' not found in Scripture. If the Doctrine be well grounded, why should we Quarrel about terms? This does not become the Followers of the Gospel. Grant Peace, O God, in our Days, and remove the Scandal of our Divisions.

*Assumption of the B. Virgin,
August 15.*

THIS Day we will speak of some Devotions to the *B. V. Mary*, and see, what are the Exceptions against them, and what the Abuses in them. And of all these,

these, whatever they be, we lay down this as a general Ground for coming to a good Understanding, that none of them, however approv'd, are enjoin'd by the Church, and so far from being made a Term of Communion, that all the Members of it are at full Liberty of using them, if they think fit, and likewise of letting them alone.

Now in Particular, as to the *Rosary* or *Beads*, it is certain they are approv'd, and may be serviceable to Piety, if us'd according to the direction of those Books, which prescribe the Method; by leading the Mind thro' all the Mysteries of Man's Redemption, and giving it a frequent Opportunity of a grateful Acknowledgment of all, that God has done for us. They may in Particular be very helpful to such as cannot read, or are any ways disabled from the use of a Book: Since by these a Person may at any time employ Half an Hour in Prayer, without any Burthen of Memory, who otherwise would be at a Loss in Spending five Minutes. This is many times a help even to the Learned; who, having their Minds fill'd with Books, or being desirous to Walk, have in these a Method of making Addresses to God;

but a much greater Help to the Ignorant, in being thus provided of a Means of being as Constant, and Spending as much time in Prayer, as those, who have the best Choice of Books. And what this Advantage is, those may easily imagin, who know how Dull and Barren are the Minds of the Unlearned, and how soon they are at a stand, when they even intend to turn their Hearts to God.

This Convenience must be acknowledged considerable; but then, when the thing is enquired into, and it appears, that in using the *Beads*, Persons Pray Ten Times more to the Virgin Mary, than to God, this overthrows all again, and makes the Advantage of such Prayers, to be worse than not praying at all. This Description of the *Beads*, I confess, has no Encouragement in it, as far as it seems to Insinuate a greater Application, and more Confidence, in the B. Virgin, than in God; but this is not a true Account.

First, Because when I desire the B. Virgin to Pray to God for me, I in this acknowledge, that all is in the Hands of God, that all must come from him, that he is the Fountain of all Good; and in asking the Virgin Mary

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to Pray to him for me, is only owning her a Creature, desiring her to be Petitioner with me, and consequently acknowledging, that God's Gifts are not in her's, but his own Hands: As often then as I repeat, *Holy Mary, Pray for me*, it cannot be truly said, that I Pray to the Virgin Mary, and not to God; for certainly, I Pray more to God, than to her. For see; when I desire a Friend, or any Just Man on Earth, to Pray for me; is it not with Hopes, that God will hear him, and Grant what I want? Is not my Hope in God, my Expectation from God, my Desire on God? And is not my Petition made to God, while I desire my Friend to pray for me? Or can it, with Truth, be said, that my Desires and Requests are more directed to him, than to God; or that I pray to him, and not to God? The Case is here plain, that as often as I desire another to Pray for me, so often do I express my Dependance on God, and so often, in effect, do I pray to him. It is the same when I desire the same of the Blessed Virgin; for all that I ask of her, is to be Petitioner to God for me; and here my Prayer is as much directed to God as my Petition is to the King, when I desire another

to deliver it to him, and to make an Interest for me. Altho' therefore I should say, a Thousand Times together, *Holy Mary, Pray for me*, it is not true, that I Pray more to the Virgin *Mary* than to God, because every time I ask it, I Pray to God, and expect the Grant of my Petition from him.

2dly, Because, when I desire the Virgin *Mary* to pray for me, it is not because I have a greater Confidence in her, than in God; no, God forbid, this is what I abhor with all my Soul, as Blasphemy it self; but because I have a greater Confidence in her Prayers, than in my own. I know my self to be an unhappy Sinner, and this Sense of my unworthiness makes me fear, lest my Petition be rejected; here's a Distrust of my self, and where is the Fault of this, if it be the Effect of Humility, and not of Despair? If then, as, by God's Order, *Job's* Friends were commanded to desire *Job* to Pray for them, because he was Just, and more Acceptable to God than they, so I solicit those to Pray for me, who are Just, and more Acceptable in God's Sight than my self, I do in this no way give them a Preference to God, but only

only to my self, hoping that their Prayer will more prevail than my own. And now, if Ten Times together, I repeat, *Holy Mary, Pray for me*, there can be no more inferr'd from hence, but that I so often express a kind of Distrust of my self, and that I think her Prayers more likely to be heard than my own. And what more in this, than in the *Israelites* desiring *Moses* or *Samuel* to Pray for them, because they hop'd, God would be favorable to their Requests, as being more Just than themselves?

But what means the so frequent Repetition of the same Prayer? If the Prayer be Good, where can be the harm of Repeating it? Can Persons in Distress be reprov'd, for often calling for help? *Perseverance* and *Importunity* in Prayer, and *Praying always*, are commended in Scripture; and can it be imagin'd, that God will not have Regard to such Perseverance, except it has Variety to recommend it? This seems a Thought beneath the Infinite Goodness of God, who prescribing us to Pray, has no where declar'd, that except we have great Change of Prayers, he will not hear us. Variety may be some help to us, in making

us more Attentive to what we say; but, as to God, I cannot apprehend upon what Head, Variety will more engage him to our Assistance, and why the Lord's Prayer, or even those Three Words, *Thy Will be done* repeated for the whole Life, may not be as acceptable, as any Collection of the greatest Variety whatever. If Repetition be nothing but a Formality or Custom, I make no Defence for it; but if it be the Expression of an Humble and Contrite Heart, or of a Soul importuning Heaven for Relief, I think there can be no Exception against it, but by absurdly, fixing on God, the Weakness of Man, and making him subject to nausea, where there is not Change or Interruption of time to prevent it. If a Soul were for Six Hours together under that one Thought of *Desiring Mercy*, would this take off the Value of his Prayer? And would it alter the Case, if that one Thought were so often expressed and repeated in Words? This has too much of shaping God to our own Imagination, and therefore I leave it. But the Confraternities under the Protection of the B. Virgin, are not to be so paid by, in which Christians list and oblige themselves to her Service,

vice, and are taught to have so great a Confidence in her, as not to fear Damnation, whatever their Lives be, so they be but Constant in their Devotion to her. The Confraternities here hinted at are most of them approv'd, and being a voluntary Engagement of Pious Persons in frequenting the Sacraments, in Prayer and Fasting, and the mutual Assistance of one another, can deserve no Censure. But if there be any such Abuses, as now mention'd, in them, I know of no Article of my Faith, that obliges me to defend them; but my Faith teaches me to condemn them. For does not the Church teach me from the Gospel to forsake my evil Ways, to deny my Self, to crucify the Flesh with its Lusts, if I desire Mercy, and expect Pardon of Sin? If then any are found, that set up for an easier Way, in giving Assurance of Salvation, upon the Ceremony of what they Wear, or the Formality of some Prayers, without quitting their Criminal Life, do not these set up another Gospel against Christ's, and can there be any difficulty in pronouncing, that, however, in these Circumstances they desire the B. Virgin to Pray for them, she has an Abhorrence

horrence of all their Devotions; since 'tis impossible, they who live in the Displeasure of God by their Wickedness, should be acceptable to the Saints, who cannot be honor'd, where God is dishonor'd? Thus it is positively declar'd in the Catechism set forth by the Three French Bishops, for the use of their Diocesses, Part. 6. art. 2. lec. 8. and those Histories censur'd as False, which give occasion to such Abuses, by representing the B. Virgin more compassionate than her Son, and that she has repriev'd some of her Devotes, whom he would have condemn'd for their Wickedness.

Hence the same Bishops *ib.* conclude, that it is necessary for every one to keep firm to the Faith of the Catholic Church, which teaching, that it is Pious and Profitable to desire the B. Virgin and other Saints to pray for us, likewise teaches it to be absolutely necessary, to place our Confidence in Jesus Christ; because, as the Scripture declares, there is no Salvation but through him, and no other Name under Heaven, by which we can be sav'd, but his alone. And hence, that our principal Devotion ought to be to Jesus Christ, who having deliver'd himself,

self to Death for our Sins, continues in Heaven to be our perpetual Advocate to the Father. Finally, Since Jesus Christ has declar'd, that however Devout we are to him, in calling him, Lord, Lord, we cannot enter into Heaven, if we do not the Will of his Father; we ought to entertain no Hopes of Salvation, whatever our Devotion be to the B. Virgin and the Saints, if we do not repent of our Sins, as God has ordain'd, and quit all our Evil Ways, to live such True Christians, as the Gospel requires.

And may not this now help to remove some Occasion of our Division, since however we are taught, to ask the B. Virgin to pray for us, and because of her great advantage of Holiness, and Glory above us Sinners, to place more Confidence in her Prayers, than our own; yet however, that our Confidence of Salvation ought to be in Jesus Christ, and his Mediation, without setting any in Competition, or to interfere with him? And as for all Abuses, either of Ignorance or Design, we are as much at liberty in renouncing and condemning them, as those, who are not in Communion of the Church, and therefore without reason, make these

these the Plea for their Separation.

Wherefore I appeal to thee, O God, who know'st, that however we desire our Fellow-members on Earth and in Heaven to pray for us, it is only to ask such Charitable Help of them, as the Living Members of the same Body, are capable, thro' thy Mercy, to give to one another; but for our Hope and Confidence of Salvation, it is only in the Promises of thy Fatherly Goodness, and the Merits of thy Only Son. And upon the Truth of this Profession, I beseech thee to remove all Just and Unjust Scandals, which are made the Occasion of our Unhappy Divisions.

S. Bartholomew, *August 24.*

ON this Festival the Subject of our Discourse shall be of Holy Relics. And of these the Church teaches no more, but that they are to be had in Veneration. And if there be a Veneration due to them, this Declaration of the Church must then be acknowledg'd as only demanding Justice. That a Veneration is due to them, there are these Reasons; *First*, Because what is Holy,

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or has any eminent Relation to God or his Service, &c. challenges a Holy Respect from us. And are not the Relics of God's Saints Holy, which have been consecrated to God, and are a part of those Sacrifices, which have been offer'd to him by Martyrdom, or the Fire of Divine Love, by which they have been signalized in his Service? Have not they an eminent Relation to him, by that Singular Grace, by which the Servants of God were distinguish'd from the Children of the World; and tho' at present left upon Earth, are to be again Parts of those Bodies, which are to be Glorify'd for ever? And what God himself is thus pleas'd to Honor, are not we to think them worthy of our Respect? Again, are not they particularly helpful in the Service of God, while they preach to me the Goodness of my God to his Servants, and thus are an encouragement both to Praise and Hope in him; while they reproach to me my own Sloth and Tepidity, and teach me to give my Life for Christ; while they are so many Memorials of God's Mercies to Poor Dust and Ashes, and to Sinful Clay, in not only delivering them from Corruption, but raising them to be Companions with

with Angels, and Partakers in their Bliss? Is not this serviceable to Eternity, and does not this deserve our Respect? We see in Scripture with what Veneration God commanded the Vessel of Manna, and Aaron's Rod, to be repositied in the Ark, and always kept in the Holy of Holies: And why? Was it not, that they might be as Monuments of God's Power and Mercy to the *Israelites*? And was there not some Respect due to these Things, which God had chosen for the Instruments of his Infinit Goodness to that People? On this same account then, do not the Holy Remains of God's Servants claim our Respect, while to us they are the Monuments of his Singular Grace, teach us, how much we ought to hope in him, who has been so merciful to others, as frail as ourselves, and daily excite us, with the Memory of his Goodness, to Bless his Name?

Again, since we find, that God has often made the Relics of his Servants to be the Instruments of his Goodness to us; as in raising the Dead Man to Life, by touching the Prophet *Elisba's* Bones, 2 or 4 *Kin.* 13. 21. in curing Diseases, and casting out Devils by Hand-

Handkerchiefs and Aprons, which had touch'd S. Paul's Body, *Acts* 19. 12. in Wonders wrought by the Shadow of S. Peter, *Acts* 5. 15. have not we hence sufficient Motive for distinguishing such Relics, by a particular Esteem for them? To contemn such things thus signalized by the Power of Heaven, would be Ingratitude to him, who has made them the Instruments of his Mercy to us; and to have them in veneration, is no more, than answers the Value he has set upon them.

This is all that the Church requires in this Point, only such a Veneration, as is due to Holy Things; and it being grounded on Scripture and Reason, we must now see, whether it be not a Doctrine and Practice agreeable to the Primitive Church, to which all appeal, while they say, they are that Church.

Eusebius, l. 7. *Hist. Eccl.* c. 19. The Faithful of the Church of Jerusalem, following the Example of their Ancestors, shew great Reverence to the Chair of St. James, who was instituted Bishop of Jerusalem, by Christ and his Apostles. — And in this they plainly declare, how great a Veneration and Honor the Primitive Christians had for He-

Holy Men, for their Love of God, and how much they are now respected by the Christians of our Days.

Cyri! Jeros. Cat. 18. *Eliseus* being yet alive, rais'd one to Life by the Power of his Soul. And that not only the Souls of the Just may be honor'd, but that there may be believ'd a certain Vertue to remain also in their Bodies; a Dead Person, that had been cast into the Sepulcher of *Eliseus*, no sooner touch'd the Body, but he was restor'd to Life.

S. Gregory Nyssen. Orat. upon S. Theodore Martyr. Whoever beholds these excellent Pictures of the Martyr's Combat, is forthwith desirous of approaching to the Sepulcher of the Martyr, not doubting, but the touching this will be a Sanctification and Blessing to him. And if any one be permitted to take of the Dust which lyes about the Monument, it is look'd on as a great Favor; and this Earth is laid up, and kept as a thing of great Value. But to touch the Relics, whenever this Happiness is granted, 'tis so desirable a Thing, so much to be wish'd for, that they only can truly explicate it, who have experienc'd it in the enjoyment of their Desires. For these, as if they

saw the Body fresh and living, kiss it, and lay it to their Eyes, their Mouth, their Ears, and to all their Senses. And then, as if the Martyr were alive and present, they beseech him to make Intercession for them.

S. Gregory Nazianzen Orat. 3. *this speaks to Julian the Apostate*: Had you no respect for those Victims slain for Christ, John, Peter, Paul, James—who are highly Honor'd, and have Solemn Days appointed in their Memory; who cast out Devils, and cure Diseases; whose Apparitions and Admonitions, nay, whose very Bodies can do the same, as their Souls, to those that touch them, or honor them; the very Drops of whose Blood, and small Marks of whose Martyrdom, can do the same with their Bodies. And these do you not honor, but contemn?

Theodore Ser. 8. cont. Græc. The Souls of the Martyrs are entertain'd in Heaven,—Their Divided Bodies retain their Power entire; those poor, little, and almost undiscernable Relics, having the same Virtue as the Whole Martyr. For it is the Grace annexed to them, which distributes those Blessings, and shares its Liberality in proportion to their Faith, that come to them.

S. Jerome. Ep. 55. We are so far from worshipping or adoring the Relics of Martyrs, that we don't do it to the Sun and Moon, to Angels or Archangels, Cherubims or Seraphins, or any other thing ' either in this World, or in that to come; lest by so doing, we should serve some Creature instead of our Creator. We Honor indeed the Relics of Martyrs, that so we may adore him, whose Martyrs they are. We shew an Honor to the Servants, that the Honor given them may redound to their Lord, who has said; He that receives you, receives me.

S. Ambrose. Serm. 14. This is the Glory of the Holy Martyrs, that tho' their Ashes are spread through the whole World, yet the Vertue is not diminish'd, but every where entire. — I honour therefore in the Flesh of the Martyr, the Wounds he receiv'd for the sake of Christ. I honor the Memory of him, yet living in the continuance of his Vertue. I honor his Ashes, made Sacred by his Confession of Christ. I honor in his Ashes, the Seeds of Eternity. I honor his Body, which has shew'd me how to love my God, and taught me, not to fear to die for my Lord. And why should not the Faithful

ful honor that Body, for which the very Devils have a Respect: Which they have caus'd to be Tormented, but is now honor'd in his Sepulcher. I honor that Body, which Christ has honor'd with Martyrdom, which shall Reign with Christ in Heaven.

St. Augustine Sermon 92. de divers. speaks thus of the Relics of S. Stephen: A little Dust has call'd together so great a Multitude. The Altar lye hid, but the Benefits are manifest. Think a little, Christians, how great Things God has reserv'd for us in the State of Bliss, who makes the Dust of those, that are Dead, so very beneficial to us. And so 103. They carry the Relics of the Blessed and Ever-Glorious Martyr Stephen, which your Holiness knows well, how reasonable it is you should honor, as we have done. The same Father writes at large of the Discovery of S. Stephen's Relics, and of many Miracles wrought by them. De Civ. dei. l. 22. c. 8.

Thus the Primitive Church, speaking by its most Holy Prelates, gives Evidence for the Doctrine of the Church, and likewise for the Practice of the Faithful, in expressing their Veneration for Holy Relics; by kissing them, and

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laying

laying them to their Eyes, and esteeming them as a Supernatural Help against evil Spirits, and for the Cure of Diseases; So far we have from Scripture and the Primitive Church.

But if there be this Authority for Sacred Relics in general, are not these however subject to great Abuses, while the same Relic is pretended to be in diverse Places; while such things are carried about for Relics, which have not sufficient Authority; and thus the People are impos'd on, in having Trifles, and, it may be, the Bones of Sinners made the Object of their Veneration, instead of Saints? It cannot be denied, but there are and have been great Abuses in this Point; but still the Doctrine of the Church is true; that Holy Relics are to be had in Veneration, and this is all she teaches; and since she lays no Tie on the Faithful, of Believing any one Particular Relic to be, what it is pretended, hence the Members of the Church are as much at Liberty of Assenting or Dissenting in this Case, as those, who are out of her Communion. They may do here, as in all other Cases subject to Mistake or Deceit, give Credit, as far as there are Grounds and Motives to deserve it; and

and while this is allow'd, if any are deceiv'd by being Over-credulous, it is their own Fault. All therefore, that can be duly inferr'd from the Supposition of Abuses, is, that Christians ought to be very Cautious, and not let a seemingly Pious Credulity carry them against the Rules of Common Prudence. But upon this account, to despise all Relics, and declaim against the use of them, as Superstitious, is not Reasonable nor Christian; for this would be, to run into the other Extreme, and to cure an imprudent Credulity, by making way for Irreligion and Atheism. For, as in Supposition, there have been Counterfeit Relics, have there not been likewise False Prophets, False Apostles, and False Gospels? Have not there been Preachers of Sedition and Heresie, instead of the Gospel, and the People been impos'd on with the Doctrin of Devils, instead of God's Word? How frequent is it now, as it ever has been, for Presuming Men to Stamp their own Private Opinions with the Sacred Character of Divine Truths, and thus disperse Poyson, where Food of Life is promis'd? Must therefore all of that Coat be branded for Impostors; and

Christianity be hiss'd out of the World for a Dream, Because for One Christ, there has appear'd Five Hundred Seducers? No; but it ought to oblige every Christian to be Cautious, and to make a Difference between Good and Evil, between True and False; and as it becomes him, not to deny every Beggar that Asks an Alms, because a great part of them are Dissemblers; so neither can it be warrantable in any, to pronounce Sentence in Gross against any thing relating to God's Honor, because in some Particulars, they have discover'd Deceit.

But how is it to be understood, where People are abus'd, and pay a Veneration, where it is not due? Much in the same manner, as when one has a real Veneration in his Heart, for a Person whom he believes Holy and Just, and he, in Reality, is nothing but a Hypocrite or Dissembler: Here is certainly a great Mistake, but it cannot be condemn'd as Criminal, when a Person has acted upon Motives, which he judg'd sufficient, according to the Rules of Common Prudence, which however reserv'd, is not still above Mistake. I cannot say so of those, who Obtrude Counterfeit Relics upon the

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the People. For, as to assert Relics confidently without due Grounds, is a Religious Rashness; so to cry up and disperse Relics amongst the People, which, those that do it, believe to be none, is the part of Impostors; and as much Money or Friends, as they make by such Frauds, so much Wrath they undoubtedly heap up to themselves. But amongst these I do not think those are to be number'd, who pretend to shew the same Relic in several Places; for this may be occasion'd by several Parts of the same Body, &c. being in several Places; or by some Mistake in History, as to the Person or Name, and this without lessening the Authority of the Relic. For as several Authors are maintain'd by Historians for the same Book; and the Authors disputed of some Books, even of Scripture, without bringing the Authority of such Books into question. So it may very well be here; the Names and Persons may be disputed, and yet the Relics be nevertheless Authentic.

Thus then stands this Point; and now if the Church proposing a Doctrine so well establish'd, requires no assent to the Abuses, but as it pre-

cribes to Pastors to be careful in re-
forming; so exhorts all the Faithful to
be Cautious against them; such Abu-
ses ought to be no Exception against
her Doctrin, nor be made the Condem-
nation of her Practice, as far as it has
the Authority of Scripture, Antiquity,
and Christian Reason to support it. Thus
far only it requires the Assent of the
Faithful; and thus far, O God, I be-
seech thee, may all be united in it.

*Nativity of the B. Virgin, Sep-
tember 8.*

WE have already spoke of the
Rosary, and in that shewn the
the ground of all Devotion to the B.
Virgin; I there declar'd, that Saying
the Beads, was a Particular Devotion,
such as the Church oblig'd none to use;
I now add for their Satisfaction, who
unjustly make Exception against them,
because of Ten Prayers being said to
the Virgin Mary for One to God; that
if any think fit to alter the Method of
the Beads, and say Ten Our Fathers for
One *Hail Mary*, or even without One,
they

they will incur no Censure of the Church, but be commended for their Devotion. And this I have seen prescrib'd to such as could not read, to say *Three or five Our Fathers* (numbering them on their Fingers or Beads; for this is the only use of them) and to add at the end of them a *Glory be to the Father*, &c. in Adoration of the B. Trinity; with Orders to repeat these several Times, according to their different Duties or Necessities; as once, in Thanksgiving to God for all Blessings: A Second Time, for Pardon of Sin: A Third Time, for Asking such Virtues, as they most want, as Patience, Purity, &c. A Fourth, for obtaining the Divine Help against usual Sins: A Fifth, for Protection in all Danger: A Sixth, for a Happy Death: A Seventh, for Family, Friends, Enemies, &c. Then at another time, to repeat them in the same Order, in Memory and Thanksgiving for all the Mysteries of our Redemption: As for the Incarnation of the Son of God; for his Birth in the Stable; for his Fasting; for his Bloody Sweat; for being Accus'd falsely, Scourg'd at a Pillar, Crown'd with Thorns, Crucified, &c. This, I say, I have seen prescrib'd, and I

add it here at large, for their sakes, who can neither read nor understand how to exercise their Thoughts in Prayer; since, by following this Prescription, they may at any time employ a Quarter or Half an Hour in Prayer, and as well as those, who are best provided with Books. But now to some Exceptions?

What means the Custom of Praying in the Streets, Walking, and sometimes Dropping a *Bead*, even while they are Talking? What mean the great Indulgences granted to the Votaries of the *Virgin Mary*, and on other Occasions? First, As to the Custom of some Places, of Praying in the Streets, there is no Direction of the Church for so doing; but Charity obliges me to believe, it has been taken up upon the Words of *S. Paul*, who advises Christians to *Pray always, and without ceasing*; and if it be done upon this Principle, not with design of being esteem'd Devout, but sincerely to raise their Minds to God, as far as Circumstances will permit, Charity will easily excuse it. But if it be done like the Pharisees, it must be condemn'd as Pharisaical; and if carried on mixing Prayers with Discourse, it must be judg'd as

as the Effect of Custom, and that such Distracted Prayer is to little purpose, Thus as far, as it can be understood as well done, we approve it; but as far, as it is Vain or Useless, we condemn it as much as others.

2dly, As to the other Point of Indulgences; that common Mistakes may be remov'd, a fuller account is to be given of them. And in the first place, it must be observ'd, that an Indulgence is not a Pardon granted for Sins to come, nor even for Sins past, nor a License to commit Sin; these are Notions, which deserve the Abhorrence of all Christians; since there cannot be any thing more Injurious to God or our Salvation, than for Man to usurp or pretend to a Power of giving leave to commit Sin against the Almighty. This therefore is what we detest with all Christians, as contrary to the Fundamentals of the Gospel, which we profess.

2dly, To come to a better Understanding, it must be observ'd, what all must confess, who have look'd into Antiquity; that in the Primitive Church, and in the Purest Times of Christianity, Public Penances were impos'd by the Canons, on all Public Sinners;

as Two Years Penance for Theft, Seven for Fornication, Eleven for Perjury, Fifteen for Adultery, Twenty for Murther, the whole Life for Apostacy, and so in proportion for others, as is set down by *S. Basil*. Part of these Penances was to stand at the Church Door, and in Penitential Habit to own their Crime, to be excluded from Public Prayer, from the Sacraments, &c. and not to give them the Communion, till their Years of Penance were finish'd. This was the rigorous Discipline of the Primitive Church, for giving Sinners a true Sense of their Crimes, and preventing all kind of Relapse.

But however it was still in the Power of the Bishop to shorten the time of the Penance, if he found just Reasons for it; such were Extraordinary Fervor in the Penitent, or some Dangerous Sickness or Persecution. For it being then a general Concern, that none should Die without the Sacraments, therefore Sickness and Persecution, were judg'd sufficient Motive for dispensing with the usual Rigor of Penance. And whenever the regular Penance was abridg'd or dispens'd with, this was call'd an Indulgence, because

it was the Effect of an Indulgence or Compassion of the Mother of the Church towards her Children, in Consideration of their Good.

This account of the Primitive Church proceeding thus with Penitents, and of dispensing, in the Cases now mention'd with the rigor of Disciplin, and short'ning their Penitentiary Humiliations by the Power of the Bishops, is to be found in all Histories of Antiquity, and is related by Dr. Cave in his *Primitive Christianity, or the Religion of the Ancient Christians*. 3. part. c. 5. p. 369, and 374. and the whole Matter may be easily understood in a Practice yet in Force, where standing in a White Sheet in the Church is the Penance; and a Release from it upon due Motives by Order of the Bishop, would be an Indulgence.

An Indulgence then is a Release of Canonical Penances upon due Motives by Order of the Church; and the thing can be no more question'd in Church than in State, but that the Authority, which enjoins Penalties, can Release them.

But is it not generally held, that by Indulgences Men are freed from the Obligation of Punishment, not only in

in the Face of the Church, but also what is due before God, and to his Justice? It is thus Piously Believ'd; but since neither our Profession of Faith, nor the Council of Trent declare any such thing, it cannot be esteem'd a Matter of Faith; and a Person may be a True Member of the Church, without assenting to it. All that our Profession requires, and so the Council of Trent, is to Believe, *That the Power of Indulgences has been given and left in the Church by Jesus Christ; and that the use of them is very beneficial to all Christian People.* So far then is a Term of Communion; but since the Council of Trent is silent as to all other Particulars, none are to be oblig'd to subscribe to them.

But if this be not of Faith, is there not Deceit then in the usual Grant of Indulgences, since these do not only extend to the remission of Canonical Penances, but likewise of such Punishment, as is due before God to Sin? No, there is no Deceit; for as the Physician proceeds upon good Principles, and free from all Deceit, who prescribes Physick to his Patient, tho' he be not certain of the Effect, but only that it can do no hurt, and may very probably do good. As the Trader and every

ry sober Man proceeds prudently in what he undertakes, when he uses all probable and likely Means, tho' the Effect and Gain be uncertain. So it is here; for suppose the Church in this Practice proceeds only upon a probable Opinion, this is very agreeable to the Rules of Honesty and Prudence; the Grounds are sufficient for hoping the good Effect propos'd; and yet if it should fail, the Faithful however are no losers; since the Special Works of Piety and Charity, which they are to perform for gaining an Indulgence, are such as must be very beneficial to them; so that, if they should be disappointed of what was propos'd, they are Gainers still.

But may not this be an Occasion of the Faithful neglecting to bring forth worthy Fruits of Penance, proportion'd to their past Crimes, upon the persuasion, that they are now discharg'd of the Punishment? It cannot be so, but by their own fault; because, tho' it be of Faith, that there is Power in the Church of granting Indulgences? yet they are taught, that this Particular Indulgence may be Invalid and Fruitless, as it may sometimes happen, either for want of Authority in the Giver,

Giver, or thro' deficiency in the Cause; and that if valid in it self, yet it may easily be invalid to them, for want of their due compliance with the Conditions requir'd of a Sincere Repentance, &c. And therefore all well-advised Christians, as *Bellarmin* observes, so accept of Indulgences, as besides them, to be careful in performing Worthy Works of Penance, as their Sins require. For if in the Sacraments themselves, where there is greater assurance of the effect, they are still taught not to rest with such Security, as to think all future Repentance unnecessary; much less are they to have this Security here, where there is more reason to question the Certainty of the Effect.

One Question more upon this Subject: If there ought to be a Sufficiency in the Cause for the validity of an Indulgence, as is generally taught, and has been now hinted; what means the Indulgences mention'd in Books, of so many Years Pardon, for Saying a short Prayer; and of many Thousand Years, for Visiting some Particular Churches; with others of this kind? *Bellarmin* answers this Question, who says, The True History of Indulgences is not to be

be taken from Adversaries; no, not from I know not what Petty Books, but from the Papal Bulls, and the Records of the Church: For no doubt, but in such little, uncertain and nameless Pamphlets, we may meet with many Fictions and corrupt Stories, and having given some Instances, then adds; Never did I read in any Approv'd Authors, that Indulgences for Thousands of Days or Years were ever granted; much less for Hundreds of Thousands: For the Popes us'd only to grant Indulgences for so many Years as the Penance enjoin'd should otherwise have lasted; which ordinarily was Two, Three, Five, Seven, Ten or Twenty Years, or at most, for one's Life. In which Words this Learned Author seems to suspect all the Indulgences mention'd as Supposititious. But however, if there have been any such formerly granted; the Council of *Trent* has done enough to take off the Scandal of such remiss Disci-
plin, in admonishing, that the granting Indulgences be done with great moderation, according to the Antient and Approv'd Custom of the Church; lest by too great remissness, Ecclesiastical Disci-
plin should be weaken'd. If then
there

there has been Abuses in this Point, it is plain, they are not approv'd, but discountenanc'd by the Church.

And now it being evident, that Indulgences are not Pardons for Sin, but only at the most, a Release of such Temporal Punishment as remains due to Sins already forgiven by a Sincere Repentance, in the Sacrament of Penance, and that neither our Profession of Faith nor Councils extend this beyond Canonical Penances, which being enjoyn'd by the Canons, it is certain the Church has Power to remit, I do not see why this should be made a Matter of Dispute. If the Pastors of the Church and the Faithful, in Practice, extend their Hopes beyond this, they have sufficient Reasons for so doing, and their Piety cannot be justly censur'd, which proposes so much good, tho' without assurance of the Effect. However the Church, in this, lays no Obligation on any, but leaves all to their Choice; She has manifested her Desires for reforming all Abuses: Where then can the reason be for Non-communication with her in this Point? Remove all Division, O God, and give Peace in our Days.

S. Matthew, September 21.

ON this Day of an Apostle, who, besides Preaching the Word, committed it to Writing, the Subject of our Discourse shall be of the Written Word, and in particular, of the Reading, it being under some Restraint, and not indifferently permitted to all.

And first is to be consider'd the Reason of this Restraint; and whether there be any color of Truth, in that, which is so positively pretended; That the Reason of Forbidding it, was for keeping the People in Darknes, and not to have the Opportunity of discovering the Errors of their Church. For seeing to the bottom of this at once, let the Matter of Fact be stated; That all Learned, Sober, Discreet Persons might have leave to read the Bible; and that they only were to be denied it, whose Ignorance, Curious and Giddy Temper, gave occasion to Fear, they would abuse it to their own destruction. Now let Common Reason Hear and Judge: The Learned, Grave and Judicious Persons may have leave to read

read the Bible; the Ignorant and Giddy are not to read it. Can now the Reason of this be, that the Errors of the Church might not be discover'd? Certainly, Learned and Discreet Men are more likely to discover Errors, than the Ignorant; if then the Church were Conscious of Errors, and that reading the Bible was most likely to bring them to Light, she would have more reason to apprehend this Discovery, from the Learned, than the Ignorant; and consequently the Restraint would have been upon them, more than others, were this Apprehension the Reason of the Prohibition. Let the Case be put in any other Matter; if Artists expose their Work to be examin'd by Men of Skill: If Physicians desire the most Experienc'd to consider the Method they use with their Patients: If Writers or Printers leave their Books to be perus'd by the Learned and Nicest Critics; and so of all others; is this an Argument of their being Conscious of Deceit, Error or Mistake in what they have done, and that they are afraid of its being discover'd? Or is it not rather an evident Proof, of their being Jealous of no Deceit; while they appeal to the Examen of those, who are best qualified

lisy'd for making the Discovery? What grounds then of Probability can there be in this Scandal advanc'd against the Church, of being Conscious of Errors, and fearing their Discovery by reading the Bible, when she leaves all the Original Texts and the *Latin* Version promiscuously to be read by all Learned Men, gives leave for those, that are Sober, Judicious and Discreet to read the Vulgar Translation, and only excepts against those, who seem to have Rashness and Folly mix'd with their Ignorance? If there be any thing of Proof in such Arguing, then the whole World is to be arraign'd of Madness, in desiring such to be Judges, who are best qualify'd for Judging, and not making choice of those, who know least of the Matter, and by their Ignorance and Rashness give least Hopes of their judging aright.

This then can be no Reason of the Restraint being put upon reading the Bible in the Vulgar Tongue. What then was the Reason? It was, that it might not be abus'd by Ignorance, Curiosity and Presumption, and that by Corrupt Minds the Food of Life might not be turn'd into Poyson. When the Rashness of Men was such, that every
one

one, that could but read, judg'd them-
selves sufficiently qualify'd for ex-
pounding the Difficulties of Holy
Writ, and positively to pronounce
upon its profoundest Mysteries; when,
by this Presumption, the Beautiful Or-
der, establish'd by the Gospel in the
Christian Church, was disfigur'd by in-
finit Schisms, and in every Corner star-
ted up some Leader of a New Congre-
gation: When every one, that was not
already engag'd, undertook to judge
of these Divisions, and by this Usurpa-
tion, put themselves in danger of still
adding to the number, by undertaking
to finish, what others had done but by
halves; when thus Ignorance, Rash-
ness and Presumption was got up into
the Chair, pretended Scripture for their
Commission, made Scripture their
Plea, and by sacrilegious Abuses made
this the Instrument of their most Un-
christian Attempts: Was it not reason-
able that Establish'd Authority shou'd
then appear, and by Prudent Restraints
endeavour to put a stop to these Evils?
Could it have found an Expedient for
making all Sober and Wise, it would
have look'd for no other; but this be-
ing not in its Power; what could it do
less, than bring those under Govern-
ment,

ment, who knew not how to govern themselves, and cut short that Liberty which they abus'd to their own Destruction? This it was the Church did; and how could she have deserv'd the Name of a Church or a Mother, had she then stood still, and in silence beheld her Children, by their Rashness, bringing Ruin on their own Souls, and those of their Generations after them? And is it not visible, that the Motive of thus exerting her Power, was not to keep the People in Ignorance, but to prevent the ill Effects of their Ignorance, and that by their Presumption of Knowing, they might not abuse the Principles of Divine Truths, for building up a *Babel* of Errors?

The Reasonableness of thus proceeding is sufficiently own'd by those, who are not of her Communion: Nay, and even by those, in Fact at least, (see the wonderful Power of Justice) who with the greatest bitterness inveigh against her for what she has done. Hear it from one, who prescribing the *Necessary Cautions to be us'd in reading the Holy Scripture*, hints at the great Indisposition of many Readers. We are to come, says he, to the Holy Scriptures, with a preparation of Mind, to embrace indifferently,

differently, whatever God there reveals, as the Object of our Faith. That we bring our own Opinions, not as the Clue, by which to unfold Scripture, but to be tried and regulated by it. The want of this has been of very pernicious Consequence in Matters both of Faith and Speculation. Men are commonly prepossess'd strongly with their own Notions; and their Errand to Scripture, is not to lend them Light to judge of them, but Aids to back and defend them.—Being once engag'd, they ransack for Texts, that carry some correspondency to the Opinions they have imbib'd; and those, how do they rack and serve to bring them to a perfect Conformity, and improve every little Probability into a Demonstration? On the other side, the contrary Texts they look on as Enemies, and consider them no farther, than to provide Fences and Guards against them: So they bring Texts, not into the Scales to Weigh, but into the Field to Skirmish, as Partisans and Auxiliaries of such or such Opinions.

By this force of Prepossession it is, that that Sacred Rule, which is the Measure and Standard of all Rectitude, is it self bow'd and distorted to countenance

tenance and aber the most Contrary Tenets; and like a variable Picture, represents differing Shapes, according to the Light, in which you view it. And sure we cannot do a worse Office, than to represent it thus dissonant to it self. Yet thus it must still be, till Men come unbiast to the reading of it.

Without this, tho' we may call Scripture the Rule of Faith, and Judge of Controversies; yet 'tis manifest, we make it not so, but reserve still the last Appeal to our own Prejudicate Phancies; and then no wonder, tho' we fall under the same Blindness, which our Saviour upbraids to the Jews; *That seeing we see not, neither do we understand,* Mat. 13. 14. For he that will not be sav'd God's Way, will hardly be so by his own. He that resolves not impartially to embrace all the Scripture's Dictates, comes to them, as unsincerely, as the Remnant of the Jews did to *Jeremiah* to enquire of the Lord for them; which he no sooner had done, but they protest against his Message, *Jer. 42. 20.* and may expect as fatal an Event.

But there are a Set of Men, who deal yet more insincerely with the Word; that read it insidiously, on purpose to collect

collect Matter of Objection and Cavi-
that with a Malicious Diligence com-
pare Texts, in hope to find Contra-
dictions; and read attentively, but to
no other end, than to remark Incohe-
rences and Defects in the Style.

In these Words this Author, pre-
scribing Cautions for reading the
Scripture, declares the great Abuses of
it. And now if the Question were de-
bated; whether a Pastor of the Church
observing some of his Flock under such
Indispositions of Mind or Judgment,
that their reading the Scripture would
be very likely for no other End, than
to rack Texts for the Confirmation
pre conceiv'd Errors, or for discover-
ing Contradictions, to bring it into De-
rision; whether, I say, it were not
advisable for a Pastor, in such Case,
to desire such Persons to forbear the
reading it, and rather to hear the
Truths there deliver'd from the
Church. If this Question were deba-
ted; might there not be good Reasons
for Resolving it in the Affirmative?
And if such a Resolution were taken,
is it not plain what the Motives would
be, since whatever Constructions Pre-
judice might put upon it, it is nothing
but Christian Compassion, and true
Charity

Charity to the Parties might be the Reason, for Votting them under this Restraint? This then is the very thing the Church has done. She desires all those may have leave to read the Bible in the Vulgar Tongue, whose Piety and good Disposition gives Hopes of their receiving Benefit from it; and denies this Favor to such, whom their Pastors observe to be of that ill Disposition, as to be likely to Prejudice their own Souls by the Abuse of it. Now the Motive of this, is not to hide from them the Light of God's Truth; for while she requires them to forbear the Book, she takes Pains in shewing them this Light; only with this difference, that she leaves it not to them to blind themselves, thro' their own ill Management of it. Neither is this to contradict those Antient Fathers, who encourag'd the reading it, for they encourag'd no other reading, but where there was Hopes of Benefit; and certainly to be Watchful against Abusive Readers only, with Liberty to all others, has no part of Contradiction to this. Neither is it to obstruct the end of its being committed to Writing; for we confess it is very Instructive in all, that a Christian is to know; that

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nothing

nothing can give him a greater Sense of God's Power, and Mercy, and Justice; that from this, as from a Fountain of Living Water, he may Drink in the Purest Principles of the Gospel; and accordingly, he offers it to all, whose Piety prepares them for this Happiness; but if she excludes the Unworthy, if she keeps them at a Distance, who would Poyson the Fountain, this is not contrary to the end of its being Written, for certainly the end of its Penning was not thus to be abus'd.

Here then is the Crime of the Church capable of being expos'd under the worst of Colors, where there is but Ignorance or Malice enough to lay them on; and so capable of being understood in a better Sense, that many, tho' otherwise Adversaries, seeing the Mischiefs of a Promiscuous Reading, and of the Liberty of Interpreting, have own'd the Reasonableness of the Prohibition. But of this Prohibition it is to be observ'd, that as the Occasion of it, was the Humor of those times, bent with Violence upon Novelties and Innoyation; so now, that Humor being spent, and the Minds of the Faithful generally more settled, there is great Connivance in the Execution

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of the Order; so that throughout France the Bible is generally read by all. Now if this whole Matter be thus duly consider'd, separate from the Scandals put upon it, I cannot but hope, all that are Friends to Charity, might easily be reconcil'd to it, and not let this be an Exception against a Universal Peace, such as the Gospel requires; which, I beseech thee, O God, to grant for thy greater Honor, and the Common Good of all that believe in thee.

S. Michael, September 29.

THE Subject I chuse for this Days Entertainment, shall be to enquire, whether the Scandal of Uncharitableness be Just, which is generally laid to the Members of the Church, while they express themselves with so much Severity against those, who are out of her Communion, and seem to shew but little Hopes of their Salvation.

And as to this, I think it must be own'd, there is nothing of Uncharitableness intended in all they say of this

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kind;

kind; since it proceeds from no other Root, but a full Perswasion, that the Church, of which they are Members, is the True Church of Christ, that Catholic Church, which all Christians by their Creed are requir'd to believe, that Church, which Christ in the Gospel has commanded all to hear under the Penalty of his Displeasure, and being looked on as Publicans or Heathens. *Mat. 18. 17.* and consequently, that all such, who are not in the Communion of this Church, are in the Displeasure of God, are Disobedient to him, and not in that Way, which Christ has appointed for the whole World, as the Way to Salvation. This being the ground of what they say, there can be no uncharitableness in it; but it must, on the contrary, be own'd, as the Effect of the greatest Charity: For if it be Charity to call upon a Traveller that is going out of his Way, and set him Right; if it be Charity to advise a Neighbor against all such Mistakes which are likely in any kind to be Prejudicial to him; whether in Health Reputation or Estate; it must be much more so in a Christian, that calls upon his Neighbor, upon the Conviction that he is not in the Way, which Christ

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has ordain'd for Salvation, and that if he goes on, it must be with danger of perishing. This, I say, must be Charity, because it is the Effect of the greatest Love towards him, and the Desire of his Salvation; even a Participation of that Charity, which mov'd the Prophets to call upon the Jews to forsake their Evil Ways, and return to their God; which mov'd Christ to undertake the Work of our Salvation, and the Apostles to expose their Lives for the Conversion of their Neighbor. All this is from one and the same Root, even from the desire of contributing to their Neighbor's Salvation. And if this, of which we here speak, be suppos'd to be built upon a Mistake; yet it is Charity still, such as deserves rather Thanks than Reproach; for as Mistake diminishes not my Charity, when I give to one, whom I believe to be in extreme Want, tho' in Reality he be not; so neither is the Charity of those Persons lessen'd, who upon a Conviction of their Neighbor going out of the Way, call upon him, tho' it should prove, that he is in the right.

That they do this upon a deliberate and full Conviction, is evident from their Choice and Profession of a Religi-

on, which has many Difficulties in the Practice, such as obliges them to perpetual Self-denials, and then lyes here under so many temporal Disadvantages, in excluding them from all Preferments of Honor and Interest, and exposing them to many Severities, as often as the Government thinks fit, that their only Motive of embracing it, must be, because they are convinc'd of its being the Antient and True Church of Christ, and that they cannot satisfie the Obligations he has laid upon them by his Commands, nor live in Hopes of his Promises, but by being Members of it.

But if they are convinc'd of their Church being the Antient, True Church of Christ, is it not still Rashness in them, to entertain such ill Thoughts of all others, who are not of their Communion? Do not they see, these believe in Christ, and all the other Fundamentals of Christian Religion, as much as themselves; that they live Piously and Justly, put their Trust in God, and keep his Commandments; and is it not Rashness then thus to pronounce them out of the Way of Salvation? It is certainly Rashness according to the Modern Scheme of Religion, which makes

up the Church of Christ of all separate Congregations, however otherwise divided in Faith, so they do but believe in Christ, with some other few Points, which they call Fundamental.

But the Question is, whether it be Reason, according to that Scheme of Religion, and of the Church, which is found in Scripture, and in the constant Practice of the Primitive Christians? The Scripture describes the Church to be as One Flock, One Body, made up indeed of different Parts, but all united in the same Faith, and with such a due Subordination, that while it was to be spread throughout the World, yet it was to retain the Order and Beauty of One Spiritual Government; hence all the Members of it were commanded to be united not only in Faith, but also in Charity and Obedience; and these Injunctions are laid so strictly, by the express Order of Christ its Head, that all Divisions both in Faith and Government, that is Heresie and Schism; are set down as Sins, which divide from the Head, and exclude from all Hopes of Salvation. This is the Character of Christ's Church deliver'd in the New Testa-

ment, and must be own'd by all, who observe what they read.

The Practice of the Primitive Church, even in the times of its confess'd Purity, was conform to this Character, and therefore in this Sense understood the Scripture. It being evident to all, that have consulted Antiquity, that the Pastors of the Church cut off from their Communion, not only those, who did not believe aright of Christ; but likewise all such, as oppos'd any other Point of the Doctrine she had receiv'd and taught; as also, those, who divided themselves from her Government: That is, all such, as broke the Unity of the Church, and endeavor'd to bring Confusion into the House of Peace. Heresie or Schism were no more tolerated by them, than Sedition and Rebellion in a Common-wealth; a *Novatian* has no more favor from them, than an *Arian*, nor a *Donatist*, than a *Macedonian*: Their Business is to preserve Peace and Charity, where God has commanded them to be kept; and they are so far from esteeming them guiltless, who by any Separation, whether in Doctrine or Government, disturb this Peace, that they equall it to the worst of all Crimes; think,

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think, that no good Work can be acceptable to God, when a Person is under this Guilt, and that he is not in the Way to Salvation. But I must give their own Words, for otherwise none can believe their Rigor in this Particular.

S. Cyprian de Unit. Eccl. He that leaves the Church of Christ, will never come to the Rewards of Christ: He is a Stranger, he is Profane, he is an Enemy. He cannot now have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother. If any one could escape, that was out of Noah's Ark, then likewise may he escape, who is out of the Church.—Whoever disturbs the Peace of Christ, makes War against Christ. And he that gathers any where out of the Church, breaks in pieces the Church of Christ.—Whoever does not preserve this Unity, does not keep the Law of God, has not the Faith of the Father and the Son, he has not Life nor Salvation.—What Sacrifices do they imagin they offer, who are in Contention with the Priests? Can they think, that Christ is with them in their Meetings, being assembled out of the Church? Such as these, tho' they suffer Death in the Confession of his
U 5 Name;

Name; yet is not their Blood capable of washing out this Stain: The unpardonable and horrid Crime of Schism is not to be expiated by Suffering: He can be no Martyr, who is not in the Church.

S. Irenæus l. 4. adv. Hæc. c. 43. We are bound to obey those Priests, who have their Succession from the Apostles, who with the Succession of their Episcopal Charge have receiv'd, according to the Ordinance of God, a fore Gift of Truth. But for others, who are not in Communion with the Principal Succession, in whatever Place they hold their Meetings, we are to look on them either as Heretics, and Men of pernicious Doctrine; or as Schismatics, full of Pride and Self-love; or, finally, as Hypocrites, carrying on their design in Hopes of Gain, and for Vain-glory. Now all these depart from the Truth: And such as are Heretics, who bring strange Fire to the Altar of God, that is, strange Doctrines, shall be consum'd with Fire from Heaven, like Nadab and Abiu, *Lev. 10.* such as rebel against the Truth, and set on others against the Church, have their Place in Hell, being swallow'd up by the Earth, as were the Complices of Chorea, Dathan, and

and Abiron, *Num. 16*. And those who make Schisms, and break the Unity of the Church, shall have the same Punishment with *Jeroboam* from the Hand of God, *3 Kings 14*.—And *1. 61*. He will judge those, who make Schisms, who are abominable, void of the Love of God, and having more concern for their own Profit, than for the Unity of the Church; who for inconsiderable, and any Reasons, divide and break asunder the Great and Glorious Body of Christ, and endeavour, as much as lyes in them, utterly to ruin it; having Peace in their Mouths, but working Destruction; truly straining at a Gnat, and swallowing a Camel; For whatever Evil they redress, it is much less than the Evil of Schism. He will likewise judge those, who believe not the Truth, that is, such as are out of the Church.

S. Augustin l. de Unit. Eccl. c. 4. The Head is the Only Begotten Son of God, and the Body his Church; Bridegroom and Bride, two in one Flesh. Whoever believes otherwise of the Head, than is taught in Scripture, altho' they are in all places as wide as the Church, yet they are not in the Church. Again; Whoever assent to the Scripture in all Things

Things concerning the Head, and yet refuse Communion in the Unity of the Church, they are not in the Church; because they reject the Testimony of Christ concerning his Body, which is the Church. They, who believe, that Christ was Incarnate, that he arose again in the same Flesh, in which he was Born and Suffer'd; that he is the Son of God, God with God, &c. and yet do so disagree with his Body, which is the Church, that they have not Communion with the Whole, where-ever diffus'd; but only with some Part, which is Separated, 'tis evident they are not in the Catholic Church. And c. 19. None can arrive to Salvation and Life Everlasting, except he has Christ for his Head; but no body can have Christ for his Head, unless he be in his Body, which is the Church.

And Ep. 204 *ad Donat. Presb.* Being out of the Pale of the Church, separated from its Unity and Bond of Charity, thou wouldst not escape Damnation, tho' thou shouldst be burnt alive in Confession of the Name of Christ.

Again. *Enarr.* in Ps. 88. Let us love our Lord God, let us love his Church: God, as our Father, the Church, as our Mother.

Mother.—No body can offend one, and oblige the other. Let no one say, I go to Idols indeed, I consult Magicians; but yet I do not forsake the Church of God, I am a Catholic still; for thus keeping to your Mother, you offend your Father. Another says, Far be it from me, I do not go to Cunning Men, I consult no Oracles of Devils, but yet I am a Follower of *Donatus*: What will it avail thee, not to have offended thy Father, who takes revenge of those, who offend their Mother? What signifies it to own a God, to honor him, to confess Christ, and that he sits at the Right Hand of his Father; if thou blasphemest his Church? —Take care therefore, my Beloved, unanimously to hold God your Father, and the Church your Mother.

Again, *L. 1. de Bapt. c. 49.* A Man may have all things out of the Catholic Church, besides Salvation. He may have Faith, Baptism, and the rest of the Sacraments; he may have the Word of God; he may believe and preach in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; he may distribute his Substance to the Poor, and give his Life for the Name of Christ; he can
and

find Salvation no where but in the Catho-
 lic Church. *Nusquam nisi in Ecclesia
 Catholica Salutem poterit invenire. Extra
 Ecclesiam Catholicam totum habere potest,
 prater salutem.*

Thus speak the most Eminent Fa-
 thers of the Primitive Church, not on-
 ly against such, as denied Christ, but
 against those, who having a Faith in
 him, and believing the other Articles
 of the Creed, were not in Communion
 with the Catholic Church, but joining
 with some Particular Congregation,
 were separated from her; and for this
 alone pronounce their guilt to be such
 as excludes from the Kingdom of Hea-
 ven.

Now, where there is so much
 ground from Scripture, so great Au-
 thority from the Practice of the Primi-
 tive Church, and from the Consent of
 her Pastors; how can it be judg'd Rash-
 ness, to join in the same Sentiments
 with them? If to break the Peace of
 the Catholic Church, if to be out of
 her Communion, was then of so dread-
 ful Consequence, as they declare, it
 must be so still; and if, without this,
 neither Faith nor Good Works were
 acceptable to Salvation in their time,
 it must be the same still; since the Or-
 dinance

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Cadinance of God is not chang'd. Thus
then is this suppos'd Severity clear'd
from Rashness; and where there is so
much grounds to apprehend the dan-
ger, where can be the Uncharitableness
of putting Persons in mind of it? It is
however much better to venture this
Censure, than to let others go on seem-
ingly secure of their Salvation in such
a way, which Antiquity declares, will
never lead to it. I am not for narrow-
ing the Way of Salvation; but if the
Gospel and the Primitive Church de-
clare it so narrow, 'tis fit all should
know it. This Principle then of An-
tiquity must be receiv'd, that to be u-
nited to the Catholic Church is neces-
sary to Salvation; but still, since we
cannot tell, how far Invincible Igno-
rance may excuse, or what may be the
Dispositions or Desires of those that
die, and whether in heart they may not
interiorly be united to the Church;
therefore none ought to pronounce of
any in Particular, but leave it to God
to Judge, - to whom Judgment be-
longs.

O God, since thou hast manifested
the Way of Salvation, convince all,
that desire to be sav'd, that they must
seek it thy Way, and not their own.
lead

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lead all into this Way; and let it be no more a Scandal, to direct others in to it: And for me, may I never be guilty of any other Uncharitableness, than to shew those, who are out of the Way, the Path that lead to Life.

S. Simon and Jude, O. *Jeb.* 28.

THE Subject of this Days Discourse shall be of the Invocation of Saints, of which the Church teaches thus, as it is deliver'd in the Council of Trent, *Sess.* 25. *It is good and profitable to call upon the Saints, and to have recourse to their Prayers, Aid and Assistance, whereby to obtain of God many Benefits, thro' the Merits of his Son Jesus Christ, who is our Redeemer and Savior.*

We have formerly shewn, that the Saints and Angels Pray for us before the Throne of God: As it appears from Zechariah 1. 12. where the Angel Prays to the Lord of Hosts for the Cities of Jerusalem and of Judah. *2dly.* For that the Blessed in Heaven abounding in Charity; for Charity never faileth, 1. Cor. 13. 8. it must be the effect

fect of this Charity to love their Brethren, to desire and pray for their Good: Their Charity, while yet imperfect on Earth, had all these good Effects; how much more now in Heaven? For certainly their being made Happy in the Possession of God, does not make them less, but more Charitable. And if *Dives* be describ'd, even while in Hell, to have that Solitude for his Brethren left on Earth, as to use means to prevent their coming into that Place of Torments; how can it be question'd, but the Blessed are as desirous for the Salvation of their Brethren on Earth, and manifest these Desires before God? The Souls of the Martyrs cry aloud for Judgment against those, who shed their Blood, *Rev. 6. 10* and does not their Charity cry as loud for Mercy to others? It is plain, here they cry with loud Voices to God, and who can say of the Blessed, that it is not as much for Mercy as Judgment? But I need not press this, which is so evident, and confess'd by so many, who are not in Communion with us.

If the Blessed in Heaven pray for us, then certainly it must be lawful for us, to desire and ask, that they would pray

pray for us, which is the Substance of this Article. In which the Words of Scripture give some grounds; as when Jacob blesses his two Grand-Sons, Gen. 48. 16. *The Angel which deliver'd me from all evil, bless these Children; and let my Name be invocated upon them, and the Names of my Fathers Abraham and Isaac.* And Rev. 1. *Grace be to you, and Peace from him, who is, and who was, and is to come, and from the Seven Spirits, who are in the Sight of his Throne.* Is not this to pray for Peace upon the Faithful, from God and his Angels, and to desire their Patronage?

That the Primitive Church believ'd this to be lawful and profitable, let the most Eminent Pastors of it give in their Evidence: S. Basil in his Sermon upon the Forty Martyrs, thus speaks to the Faithful of his time: You have often endeavour'd to find One to pray for you; now here are Forty pouring forth Prayers to God with one consent for you.— He that is in Affliction has recourse to these, and he that is in Prosperity, betakes himself likewise to them: The one, that he may find Relief; the other, to beg a continuance of his Happiness. Here a Mother praying for her Children is heard. A Wife petitions a

safe

safe Return for her Husband abroad,
and Health for him, when he is
Sick.

*S. Gregory Nazianzen Orat. 20. on
S. Basil:* But thou, O Holy and Di-
vine Soul, look down from Heaven
upon us, and either restrain by thy
Prayers, the Thorn in the Flesh,
which God has permitted for our Exer-
cise, or, at least, prevail, that we may
bear it with courage; and direct our
whole Life to that, which shall be most
for our advantage. *And Orat. 18. He
thus addresses to S. Cyprian:* Do you,
full of Compassion, look upon us from
Heaven; direct our Words and Life,
and help me, who have the Charge of
this Holy Flock.

*S. Gregory Nyssen. Orat. upon S. Theodore,
Martyr, thus calls upon him:* Intercede
and pray for our Country before the
Lord and Sovereign of the Universe.
—Altho' thou hast left this World,
yet thou know'st our Desires, our
Wants, and the Necessities of Human
Life. Ask for Peace, that these our
Public Assemblies be not interrupted.
—And if a more Powerful Plea and
Intercession be necessary, summon all
thy Brother Martyrs, and with them
join in Prayer.

S. Chryſoſtom in his Homily upon **S. Bernice** and other Martyrs; thus ſpeaks to his People: Let us viſit them, not only on this Day of their Feſtival, but alſo on other Days; let us pray and heartily beſeech them to be our Patronneſſes. For their Intereſt is great, not only whiſt alive, but after death alſo; nay, much greater ſince their death. For now they bear the Scars of Chriſt, and ſhewing their Wounds, their Sovereign can deny them nothing.

S. *Ambrose l. de viduis.* We are to desire the assistance of the Angels, who are appointed for our defence: We are to pray to the Martyrs, whose Patronage we may justly claim, on the account of their Bodies, which we possess. They can pray for the remission of our Sins, who cancell'd their own, if guilty of any, by the effusion of their Blood:— Let us not be asham'd to call them in Advocates for our Failings, who, when alive, were themselves sensible of Infirmities.

S. Jerome against *Vigilantius*; You say, says he, in your Libel, that while we are alive, we can pray for one another; but that being dead, no one's Prayer will be heard for another; especially, since the Martyrs praying, that their

their Blood might be reveng'd, could not obtain it. If the Apostles and Martyrs being yet in the Body, can pray for others, when as yet they ought to be solicitous for themselves; how much more can they do it now, after they have receiv'd their Crowns, after their Victories and Triumphs? *Moses*, one single Man, obtain'd pardon of God for Six Hundred Thousand Arm'd Men. And *Stephen* obtain'd Mercy for his Persecutors; and being now in Heaven with Christ, are they less able?

Theodore 1. de cur. Grae. off. Ser. 3. In the Temples of the Martyrs we meet several times in the Day to praise the God of Martyrs. Those, that are in Health, pray for a continuance of it, and such as are Sick, that they may recover.—Those who are to begin a Journey, ask of these to accompany them, and to be their Guides in the Way; and such as are return'd safe, here come to pay their Thanks. Neither do they make their Addresses to them, as to Gods; but only beseech them as Holy Men, to intercede to God for them. And, that such, as ask with Faith, have their Requests granted, the Gifts they bring in acknowledgment of their Cures,

478 S. Simon and Jude,

Cures, are a sufficient Argument, For some hang up Eyes, others Feet, others Hands made in Gold or Silver.

S. Augustin Ser. 17. de Verb. Ap. c. 1.

It is the Church Disciplin, as the Faithful well know, that when the Names of the Martyrs are rehears'd at the Altar of God, we do not pray for them, but only for other Faithful departed: For it is an Injury to pray for a Martyr, to whose Prayers we ought to recommend our selves. And in *l. de Cir. dei. l. 22. c. 8.* he brings many Instances of such, as had receiv'd Miraculous Helps at the Shrines of Saints; one of a Pious Mother, who brought her Dead Child to the Shrine of S. Stephen, and there of the Blessed Martyr demanded Life for her Son. A thing both commended by S. Austin, as a Testimony of her great Faith, and confirm'd for such by God, in restoring her Son to Life, at the Intercession of the Saint: God, says he, *doing it per Martyrem, by his Mar-*

Thus speak the most Eminent Pastors of the Primitive Church, and it being generally in their Sermons to the People, it cannot be doubted, but they approv'd

approv'd the Practice as lawful and profitable, as the Church has declar'd, and consequently, that the Doctrine is Primitive, tho' the Definition be Modern.

Neither is this Practice what S. Paul condemns, Colos. 2. 18. as the *Worshipping* Religion of Angels. For these Words of the Apostle are directed against the Errors of Simon Magus and others, who held the Angels to be our Mediators, and not Christ, *non tenens Caput*, not holding the Head, as the Apostle here speaks, and prescrib'd Sacrifices to be offer'd to them. So S. Chrysostome Ho. 7. upon this Place. The same are expounded by S. Jerome and Theodoret, of an Idolatry of the Jews, in worshipping the Angels, as the Givers of the Law, by whom the Faithful were perswaded to forsake Christ. To turn them therefore against the Doctrine of the Church, is not the Meaning of the Apostle, but a Force upon the Text.

Neither is this Practice injurious to the Mediation of Christ; since it is to desire no more of the Saints, than what we ask of Sinners. To desire others to pray for us, is not injurious to Christ's Mediation; but it is what he approves, and all Practice; and if this Charity
may

may be ask'd of Sinful Men, and of the Just on Earth; why not of the Just in Heaven? We ask nothing of them, but as we do of our Fellow-Members on Earth, that is, as the Council declares, that we may obtain Benefits of God, thro' Jesus Christ; in whatever Words our Desires are exprest, no more is meant by them. And if we forsake not Christ, when we pray for our selves, so we forsake him not, when we desire others to join with us in Prayers; this is no more than to encrease the Number of Petitioners, which can be no dishonor to God; but to acknowledge him to be above all; and if the Blessed are call'd in to this Number, this is to confess them to be the Creatures of God, and that, like us poor, sinful Clay, they have nothing in their Power, but to beg of God, as we do, through Jesus Christ. This is only to desire them to take our Places, in becoming Petitioners, which is far from advancing them to the Honor of God, or the Mediation of Christ. And tho' we do this on our Knees, yet this Posture can no more make it criminal, than it is in Children to ask their Parents Blessing on their Knees; or for the People in the same Posture, to ask Blessing

Blessing of a Priest or Bishop.

But if the Practice can be thus clear'd, yet what can it signifie to pray to the Saints, since we cannot be sure, the Saints hear us? The Scripture shews, that the Angels know our Necessities and Prayers: As in the Angel praying for Jerusalem, and the Cities of Judah, *Zech. 1. 12.* and not only mentioning their Captivity, but likewise the particular of the Years of their being Captives. Again, in their rejoicing upon a Sinner, that repents; there being nothing more hidden, than the true Conversion of a Sinner: Then in *Rev. 8. 4.* *The smoke of the Incenses of the Prayers of the Saints, ascended from the Hand of the Angel before God.* And now since Christ himself says, that *the Just in the Resurrection shall be as the Angels in Heaven, Matt. 22. 30.* and now enjoy the same Blissful Vision with them; is there not reason to believe, that our Prayers and Concerns are known also to the Saints? It being likewise recorded of them, that *they had Golden Vials full of Odors, which are the Prayers of the Saints; that is, of the Faithful on Earth, who are here call'd Saints, as there are often in other places of H. Scripture.*

But if we suppose, that the Saints have no Particular Knowledge of the Requests made to them ; yet may it still be profitable to desire their Prayers. For as when a Person at Church, being inform'd of many Sick in the Parish desiring the Prayers of the Congregation, offers up his Prayers, and begs Grace and Comfort for all those, who desire the Prayers of the Assembly, this Prayer in General may be beneficial in Particular to the Parties, tho' he heard nothing in Particular of them, and had no Knowledge of any one, that had desir'd this Charity : So likewise, if the Saints pray only in General for such on Earth, as ask their Intercession, this may be an Advantage to those, who ask it, tho' they have no Particular Knowledge of the Requests made to them, or of the Parties, that make them. This is one of S. Austin's Answers, who having put this Question ; *How the Martyrs help those, who are certainly help'd by them ?* Among other Answers, adds this ; *That it may be by their Praying in General for the Necessities of those, that ask, as we pray for the Dead, with whom we are not Present, and where they are, or what they do, we know not. l. de Cur. pro mortuis.* If then the Primitive Fathers

Fathers questioning, whether the Saints hear us, made this no Objection against Desiring their Prayers, but still suppos'd the Practice Lawful and Profitable, so the same Objection may be made still, without any Injury to the present Doctrine and Practice of the Church. Those, who want Help, and see the Means to obtain it, will not forbear the use of such Means, till they can be satisfied *How* and *Which way* such Help comes; and those, who do it, 'tis a Sign their Curiosity is greater than their Wants.

For my part, O God, I confess the Business of Salvation is of so great Concern, that I gladly embrace all Helps, and think it an Argument of Indifference in me, to slight any of those Ways, by which I am assur'd, thou has given Help to others. This is one, of which I have this Assurance both from the Primitive and Present Church; it must be therefore Rashness in me to Despise that, which can do no harm, and so great Authority declares will do me good.

All-Saints, November 1.

HAVING, on the past Festivals, given a short account of the Doctrine of the Church, as it is deliver'd in her General Councils, I must now make a Conclusion, and it shall be by declaring, that were the Church's Doctrine such as it is represented and believ'd by many, I should think her Communion as unsafe as they do, and be so far from disapproving a Reformation, as to own, there could be no Salvation without it. For when I read the Doctrines and Practices, as they are describ'd by Adversaries, and positively charg'd upon her, I must confess, I see so much in them contrary to Common Sense, to Reason, to the Commandments, and to the Word of God, that I cannot wonder at those, who detest them, nor at their ranking such a Profession with that of *Turks* and *Infidels*. But as it is not Just to take the Character of Christ from the Pharisees, so neither of the Church from her Adversaries; for Prejudice and Aversion are never Good Painters; let the ground of Dislike be what it will, such is the Weakness

Weakness of our Nature, it is generally influenc'd by it, even as to our most Discerning Faculties, so that we are there very often in the Dark, where we seem to have the Light of Demonstration. I do not pretend Exemption; but appeal to the whole World to pronounce upon the Truth of it, as to our present Subject. It is well known, what is with great Numbers, the Character of our Church, such as puts it upon the level with Infidelity; let the Truth of it be judg'd by its Doctrin, which I will here set down in short. I have been now many Years a Member of the Church, and tho', thro' my Fault, I am not what I have been taught; yet thus am I taught by her.

First, To believe in One God, to confess him Infinite in Power, and Goodness, and Mercy, that he is the Author of all Good, and that all depends on his Blessed Will. *2^{dly}*, To Hope and Place my whole Confidence of Salvation in God, thro' the Merit and Passion of his Only Son, Christ Jesus, Blessed for Evermore; so that whatever I seek, or whatever Means I use, it is still with an entire Dependance on the Goodness and Fidelity of God, thro' Jesus Christ, by whom alone whatever is ac-

ceptable to God can become acceptable to him. 3dly, To Love him above all things, to seek him, as my chiefest Good; and rather to lose all the Conveniencies of Life than offend against him. 4thly, To Honor and Worship him as God and Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, and rather to Surrender Liberty, Life, and whatever else is dear to me, than give his Honor to another, or Worship any Creature for God. 5thly, To Confess, that, if thro' my Misfortune, I fall into Sin, I must seek Pardon from the Mercy of God; that there is no Pardon can be hoped, without a sincere Conversion of the Heart to God, and a true Repentance; that there is no Power, but of God, can forgive Sin. 6thly, That of my self I am a Poor, Sinful Creature; that I am capable of doing no good, but thro' the Grace of God, which is to give me both to will and to do: That I have nothing Good in me, but his Gifts; that if he rewards any thing in me, he rewards his own Gifts: That Salvation is a Work of Mercy and Grace; that what we do by the Grace of God, is no less his Work, than what he does alone by his absolute Power; that what we give to him, belongs no less to him, than

than what he gives to us. *Lastly*, That our whole Dependance being thus on God, and having no Assurance of our own Interior State, we ought not to confide in our selves; but having done all we are able to recommend our selves to the Mercy of God, still to esteem our selves Unprofitable Servants, and Work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.

Thus am I taught by the Church, these are the Sentiments of my Soul, which I have been taught by her Books, Sermons and Instructions, and with these I hope to be found at my last Hour. Now let the Christian World judge, whether these Doctrines are not according to the Gospel of Christ; whether the Church, that teaches them, be no better than Heathen; whether there can be a Necessity of leaving this Church, to be taught better by any other. And yet this is the Church, which lies under the worst of Scandals.

But however, I must so far do right to Justice, as to own, that there are some Occasions, from which these Scandals are taken; much the same, from whence *Grotius* observes, (*Judgment of Points Controv. Print. Lond. p. 91.*)

was taken the Occasion of the Reformation, that is, from the Doctrines of School-men introduced by a certain Liberty of Argumentation; from the Doctrines of Councils not commodiously explain'd by School-men; from the Pride, Avarice, ill Manners of Prelates, and Abuses not then corrected. By which the Antient Doctrine of the Church being thus Overclouded, partly appear'd not, partly being discolour'd, seem'd other than it was. Such Reasons as these, there are for the Scandals rais'd against the Church. But however, this neither justifies the raising or continuing these Scandals against the Church, nor obliges any to separate from it; since the Doctrine of the Church is not to be taken from the Incommodious Explanations of School-men, but from her General Councils; and let the Church be never so Apostolic, there will be ever Tares mixt with the Corn, the total Separation of which must be left to the Harvest at the last Day. If then the Members of the Church are not taught to take their Faith from the Opinions of the Schools, nor their Morals from ill Example of the Prelates or others, but are at as full Liberty of departing from them, as any others; that are out of her Communion; if, with the same,

same, they may renounce all Abuses and Wicked Practices, by whatever Prelates they have been conniv'd at or encourag'd; tho' such Opinions, Abuses and Evil Practices, may be made an advantage against her; yet they cannot be justly charg'd upon her, as her Doctrin, nor can any of her Members be under a Necessity of forsaking her Communion upon this account. For if this were warrantable, they must be oblig'd to forsake the Communion of all Christian Churches in the World; there being none, which has not absurd Opinions amongst its Divines, great Abuses in the Practice of Religion, and Abominations committed by some of its Pastors: Such as, if drawn out into all the Consequences they will bear from a Prejudic'd Hand, would make as Monstrous a Figure, as that Church has, which they forsake.

Well, but if a Church is not to answer, any more than a Commonwealth, for the Abuses of all Governors or Members, and for this is not to be overthrown by those, who belong to it; yet it may be justly forsaken, if it departs from Primitive Christianity, if it authorizes Doctrines contrary to the Word of God, if it sets

up new Articles of Faith, and teaches Superstition and Idolatry. Upon the Supposition of such Abominations being made evident against the Church, a Separation from her must be own'd just. But how evident then ought such Proofs to be, against an Authority, which was establish'd by Christ, which has its Commission of teaching the whole World, given by Christ, and Seal'd with his Blood; which was secur'd in teaching the Truth by his Promises, and which the whole World was commanded to hear under the greatest Penalties? How evident, I say, ought such Proofs to be, against the Ordinance of Christ, the Spouse of Christ, against that Church, which the Creed declares to be Holy; for it is that Church, which is arraign'd of these Crimes?

And where is this Evidence? I have summ'd up the Principal Doctrines of the Church, against which the Charge is laid; and taking them, as they are deliver'd by General Councils, (and so far only are they Terms of Communion) and as separate from School-Opinions and Abuses; and it may be then observ'd, that there is not one Point propos'd as of Faith by the Church, but

but what has been positively so declar'd by the Legal Authority of the Church assembled in its Pastors, according to the Form authorized by the Apostles, *Acts* 15. and observ'd by the Primitive Church. This is no small Point, considering the Establishment of the Church, its Commission of Teaching, and the Injunction upon the whole World of hearing it. 2dly, That what the Church has thus declar'd, is built on the Word of God, and on the Testimony of the Primitive Fathers: So far, that *Grotius*, having taken pains in reading the Chief Writers of Old Time, all the Writers of the Three best Ages, and those especially, who were esteem'd the best Interpreters of Scripture, and then having collected by the Testimony of the Antients, what was deliver'd always, and every where, and constantly, he at last confesses, that *he found the same remaining in that Church, which is join'd to the Roman.* (*ib. ut sup.*) Now while the Doctrines disputed have the Authority of Scripture, of Fathers, and of the Church, to warrant them, what can be the Evidence against them?

The Scripture is brought against them. It is so far true, that Objections
are

are brought from Scripture against them; and so there are by the *Arians* and *Socinians* against the Trinity, and by others against the most Fundamental Articles of the Creed. But where is the Evidence, that they, who expound the Scripture contrary to the Church, understand it better than the Church? Can they produce a better Commission, surer Promises for expounding the Scripture, and teaching the Truth, than the Church does? Has their Proceeding been more Legal? Can they shew a greater Authority, more Piety or Learning? If they cannot, where then is their Evidence against the Doctrines of the Church? I will allow, they interpret the Scripture contrary to the Church; but this comes to no more, than for a Plaintiff to expound the Law in favour of his own Cause; and will this pass for an Evidence of his Right in any Court of the World?

2dly, The Fathers are brought against the Doctrines of the Church. It is true, there are Objections out of the Fathers; and if the Scripture it self be so penn'd, that some Expressions of it are Objections against others, it can be no surprize, to find the same in the great

great Volumes of the Fathers. But would not one rationally expect, that when the Appeal is made to the Primitive Church, the Pastors of that Antient Church should be produced, evidently condemning those Doctrines, which are of late condemn'd as Errors? And when the whole Matter is examin'd, the greatest part of those, who separated from the Church upon the presumption of Errors, have charg'd the Primitive Fathers with the same Errors; and in this own'd, that those Antient Prelates taught the very same, which the Church at present teaches. And tho' others, not pleas'd with this Concession, have found a way to interpret all those Testimonies of the Fathers, contrary to the plain import of the Words; yet how far is this from making Antiquity a plain Evidence against the Church, to prove that her Doctrines are Innovation and Error?

These are the Two great Proofs advanc'd against the Church; and yet, when duly consider'd, how far are they from Evidence? And if there is so little in them, that such Depositions would not be allow'd in any Court of Judicature, for carrying a Cause of the most trivial

trivial concern ; how can they be sufficient against the Church, whose Institution and Commission are Divine, and whose Peace cannot be broken, but with the worst of Crimes? Besides these, if we consider other Proofs, and which prevail with great numbers, such as are Unjust Calumnies, Misconstructions of Prejudice and Passion, Monstrous Consequences from School-Opinions, Abuses, and Matters of Fact, with infinit other Satyrs, these are so far from the Evidence requir'd in a Matter of so great a Concern, that no body can help suspecting a Cause, which by such undue ways makes its defence. But this is an ungrateful Matter, and therefore I forbear ; and only repeat again, that having weigh'd with all the Seriousness I am able, the Proofs advanc'd against the Church, upon which, by so many, she is condemn'd of Innovation and Error, I can find no Evidence in them ; which yet ought to be very great for passing such a Sentence ; because, as has been hinted, the Authority arraign'd is that, which God has set over us, and laid such strict Commands on us of Hearing, Obeying, Submitting, and being Subject to it. 2dly, Because of the rigorous Injunctions

junctions of preserving Unity and Peace, and living in such Charity as becomes the Members of the same Mystical Body of Christ. *Lastly*, Because of the weighty Inconveniencies, that must unavoidably attend it : For if the Authority of the Church be once overthrown, and judg'd insufficient, and not to be depended on for teaching Truth, whatever Churches after this are set up, they can have no Right, Title or Authority, upon which they can oblige any in Conscience to receive and believe what they teach ; but are expos'd to the Censures of all, that dislike their Doctrin ; all are left to the liberty of their own Private Sense and Judgment ; and thus comes the whole Ordinance of Christ to be subverted ; since instead of the whole World being United in One Faith, and being One Body, all will be in Division, neither Peace, Union, nor Charity amongst them : All judging themselves sufficient Judges ; all abounding in their own Sense ; all finding Proofs to maintain their own Thoughts, and few failing in that Positiveness and Pride, as to condemn all others of Error, who are not of their Mind : Thus what Christ fix'd upon a Rock, is all brought

brought upon the Sand: Sad State of Christ's Church, if this be the State of it. These Hints must suffice.

And now 'tis time I should conclude ; and how ? But by begging the Blessing of Almighty God upon these and other Instructions, which I have publish'd, that they may be to the Honor of his Holy Name, and the Good of my Neighbor ; and by making this Request to my Neighbor , whether Members of the Church, or not, that they would read all with that Charity, which is due to one, who has no other design, than to shew them the Morality and Truth of the Gospel. If I have been mistaken in any thing, I beseech thee, O God, to supply it by thy heavenly Light. *Amen*, I say with all Sincerity, and from my Heart.

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APPENDIX.

HAVING given some account, in these Instructions, of the Faith of the Church, I here repeat it again in short; that so the Members of it may have Opportunity of seeing, at one Glance, what their Church teaches, and all others, whose Moderation inclines them to Peace, may see how far Debates may be lessen'd.

The Church requires all the Faithful to believe the Apostles Creed, and likewise to assent to such Declarations of the Faith receiv'd, which she has been oblig'd to make, in Opposition to those, who, at any time, have endeavor'd to spread New Doctrines amongst the Faithful, contrary to what she had receiv'd. She being oblig'd, not to permit any Doctrin receiv'd from the Primitive Church, to be condemn'd;

demn'd; nor to suffer any Practice helpful to Salvation, to be brought into Contempt. To satisfie then this Obligation and Trust repos'd in her, she has made several Declarations, which I will hereset down, with some short Illustration to them taken out of her General Councils, or most approv'd Catechisms.

That Apostolical and Ecclesiastical Traditions are to be receiv'd by the Faithful, that is, such Doctrines and Matters of Disciplin, which have been receiv'd from the Apostles and Primitive Church, and deliver'd down to us by the Living Voice of the Faithful.

That the Sacred Scripture ought to be understood in that Sense, which the Church has always held and does hold; which being ordain'd by Christ to teach the Truth, has in this the best Title for expounding it; and having continued thro' all Ages from the Apostles Days, has had the Opportunity of delivering down the Sense of it receiv'd from the Apostles.

That there are Seven Sacraments, or Seven Outward Signs of Inward Grace Instituted by Christ; tho' all of them not Necessary for all. These are, Baptism, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper;

Supper; Confirmation, in which the Holy Ghost is pour'd forth upon the Faithful, by the Imposition of Hands, &c. Penance, in which Pardon of Sin is promis'd, upon the Confession of a Sincere Repentance, and the Absolution of the Pastor. Extreme Unction, or the Last Anointing; where Grace is promis'd to the Sick, upon Anointing with Oil, and the Prayer of Faith. *James* 5. 14. Holy Order, in which Power and Grace is given, thro' the Holy Ghost, to the Ministers of the Church, by the Imposition of Hands. Matrimony, which is rais'd to the Dignity of a Sacrament in the New Law, and to such, as worthily receive it, gives Grace for satisfying the Duties of that State.

That the Rites and Ceremonies appointed by the Church in the Administration of the Sacraments be receiv'd; it being Just, that the Members of the Church should approve, what the Church, upon due Considerations, has order'd in Spiritual Affairs.

That Christ is really and substantially Present in the Sacrament, under the Forms of Bread and Wine; as the Holy Ghost was really Present under the Form of a Dove. That this Presence
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of Christ is not in a Coporeal, but Ineffable Manner: That this Presence is effected by the same Power of God, by which the Rivers of *Egypt* were chang'd into Blood, and the Water into Wine at *Cana of Galilee*; which Change of the Substance of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament, is call'd by the Church Transubstantiation.

That the Offering of the Body and Blood of Christ under the Forms of Bread and Wine, is a Memorial of Christ's Passion, and a Proper Sacrifice available with God for obtaining Blessings on the Living and the Dead, by laying before the Eternal Father the infinite Value of his Son's bitter Passion.

That Christ being really Present both under the Form of Bread, and likewise under the Form of Wine, it is good and profitable to receive the Holy Communion either in One Kind or in Both: That, amongst the Primitive Christians, it being receiv'd sometimes in One Kind, tho' more generally in Both, it is subject (like other Matters of Disciplin) to the Orders of the Church, and to be done, as she shall judge proper.

That such Souls, as depart this Life,
not

not under the Guilt of Damnation, and yet not so Pure, as to be immediately fit for Heaven, are deposited in a Third Place, by the Church call'd Purgatory, where they are purified by Suffering, and reliev'd by the Prayers and Alms of their Fellow-members on Earth, till they are admitted by the Divine Goodness into Heaven.

That, as it is good and profitable to ask the Faithful on Earth to Pray for us; so it is good and profitable to ask the Blessed in Heaven to Pray for us, for obtaining Blessings of God, thro' his Son Jesus Christ, who alone is our Redeemer and Savior.

That the Images of Christ, Virgin Mary, &c. have no Divinity or Power in them, for which they are to be Worshipp'd, Confided in, or Pray'd to; but that there is a Veneration due to them, as to other Holy Things, which belong to the Service of God, or are Helpful to the Faithful in serving him; and that this Veneration, which is due, ought to be given them.

That a like Holy Respect or Veneration is due to the Relics of Saints, as to other Holy Things.

That Christ having given to the Pastors of his Church the Power of Binding

ing and Loosing, the said Pastors may, in Virtue of this Power, enjoin Penalties on Sinners, and likewise, upon due Motives, release them, the Grant of which Release is call'd an Indulgence.

That Christ having given to the Pastors of the Church the Power of Forgiving or Retaining Sins, they have this Power: That this Power is of God, and the Pastors are the Ministers of it: That, if Penitents are prepar'd by a Sincere Repentance in the Confession of their Sins, the Absolution of the Pastors has its Effect, so that what is Forgiveness by them on Earth, is Forgiveness in Heaven: As in Baptism, Original Sin, is Forgiveness by them, as the Ministers of God.

That S. Peter had a Particular Power given him by Christ, above the other Apostles, for preserving Unity in the Church, and preventing Schism: That this Prerogative is deriv'd to his Successors, for answering the same Necessities of the Church.

All these Points the Church has declar'd, and the Substance of them, as they are deliver'd by the Council of Trent, and express'd in the Common Profession, are to be assented to by all the Faithful;

Faithful ; so that these are Terms of Communion, and none can be a Member of the Church, who does not positively assent to them, either by an explicit or implicit Faith. The Reason is, because, not only to Doubt of, but even to suspend an Assent, as to any one Point, which the Church has declar'd to be of Faith, is to question the Authority, the Commission, and the Truth of the Church ; since these are all involv'd in every such Declaration she makes, and every Article, in this Sense, is equally Fundamental ; there being not any one, tho' seemingly of an Inferior Concern, but, upon its being question'd, the Authority and whole Constitution of the Church is, upon this, as much overthrown, as if the Truth of its Declarations were question'd in the Highest Mysteries of the Christian Faith ; since tho' the Subject or Matter of the Declarations may be very different, yet her Authority and Truth are alike concern'd in all.

These Points then are to be assented to with a positive Faith, and there is this general Motive for giving such Assent : That, upon these Doctrines and Practices being question'd, the Church

Church appear'd in her Pastors Assembled, upon a due Examination, declar'd, that such Doctrines and Practices had been deliver'd to her, and were receiv'd from the Primitive Church and the Apostles; and therefore were not to be brought into Contempt, or Oppos'd, but Embraced by the Faithful, and deliver'd to succeeding Ages, in the same manner, as they had been receiv'd.

Thus the Church has declar'd; and she being the Best Witness of what Doctrines had been thus deliver'd from the Apostles and Primitive Church; and likewise being ordain'd by Christ for teaching the Truth, and every way qualified for answering this End of her Institution; there is in this a sufficient Motive for receiving what she has declar'd; and a disbelief of her, cannot be separated from the Confusion of Private Judgment, which, upon the Disowning a Decisive Power in the Church, has no Tie of Conscience to be a Barr to its unlimited Presumptions.

Not but that there may be still Matter for Objection, both from Scripture, Fathers and Reason, after the Declaration of the Church. For such there were

were advanc'd against the Decisions of the First General Councils; the *Arians*, *Nestorians* and *Macedonians*, who had been condemn'd by them, appealing to Scripture, the Fathers, and Reason, for justifying their Opinions against the Definitions of the Church; and every one, that is vers'd in Scripture and Fathers cannot but see, that Wit and Learning can never be at a Loss for Arguments out of these, in Defence of the grossest Absurdities both in Faith and Morals, if the Liberty of their own Interpretations be allow'd them: But then as such Objections, in those former Times, were of no Weight against the Church, for Invalidating her Decisions; so neither ought they to be now; for as the Church proceeding according to the Method of the Primitive Church, her Decisions ought to have the same Authority with those that are more Primitive; so the Objections against her latter Decisions being from the same Heads, and according to the Method of the Objections against her more Primitive Decisions, can have no more Weight in them, than those former Objections had.

These Points are the only Ground of Difference in Doctrin between the
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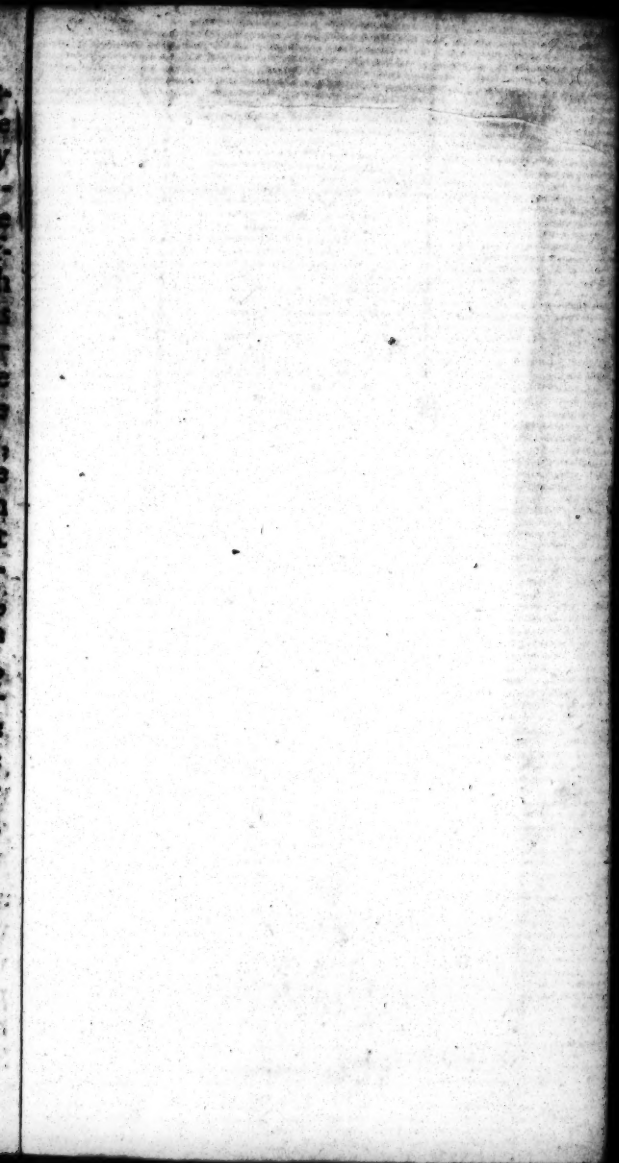
Mother Church, and other Separate Congregations; so that if there could be an Agreement in these, the Scandalous Schisms of *Christendom* would be in a great part remov'd. For as for all those other Heads, upon which the Breach is kept open, and even widen'd every Day, I cannot but look on them, as the Advantages, which Prejudice and Passion take, which consult not Justice in the Management of their Cause. For what if there be many Incommodious Opinions of School-men; infinit Abuses in the Practice of Religion; Pride and Covetousness amongst its Professors and Pastors? What if Notorious Barbarities have been contriv'd and carried on by some of its Members, and have had the Countenance of some in greatest Dignity? Yet no body can say with Truth, that these are Articles of our Religion; that they have been determin'd by General Councils, and that the Members of the Church are oblig'd to subscribe to them, or approve them. No, they are no resule of Councils, nor have any part in our Profession of Faith; and therefore ought to be made no part of Controversie, nor be taken up as Arguments for separating from the Doctrin and Faith of the Church.

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The Faith indeed of the Church is to be receiv'd with an Assent free from doubt, grounded upon the Wisdom, Goodness and Fideliry of Christ, who both ordain'd and qualified her for teaching his Truths: But as for the Abuses and Scandalous Practices of some of its Professors, these are no more to be approv'd, than the Tares amongst the Corn; *Moses* is to be follow'd by the People, as God gives command, but yet they are not oblig'd to approve his Impatience and Murmuring; nor yet can the Knowledge of his Failings, justify the People in withdrawing from his Conduct. The Church has a Promise for Teaching Truth; and in this she is to be follow'd; but there is no Promise, that all, that belong to her, shall be Saints, and therefore there can be no Necessity of defending or approving all these do. Why then should these be made the Subject of Controversie, when the Members of the Church have as great a Sense of these Disorders, as those, who are not of her Communion; when they Lament, what others Reproach, and make it their daily Prayer, that God would please to take away all Scandals? If all would join in the
same

same Prayer, it would be a much better Expedient for Peace, than those Heats, which being not kindled by Charity, cannot be bless'd with so happy a Fruit. Let then all, that desire Peace, remember, that the Only Difficulty, is in those Articles, in which the Church declares the Faith she has receiv'd; and as for all other Opinions, Abuses and ill Practices, the Members of the Church are no more oblig'd to assent to them, than others, who are out of the Pale. For the Terms then of Communion let them be consider'd with the Authority, that has propos'd them: And as for all other things, let them not Reproach, but Pray, that God will Reform both Pastors and People, Correct Abuses, Root out Ambition, Pride, Covetousness and Luxury, and Establish the Hearts of all with such Principles of the Gospel, that Religion may no more be made a Cover to Unwarrantable and Wicked Designs, but only for the Honor of God's Holy Name, and the Salvation of those, whom Christ has purchas'd by his Blood.

F I N I S.



AFTERNOON
Instructions
FOR THE
WHOLE YEAR.

T O M. II.

B E I N G

Practical Thoughts for all
*Sundays and Holidays, from
Easter to Advent.*

Printed in the Year 1699.

who are subject to this Weakness. But, besides many others, a considerable Mischief is, in imposing silence on their Best Friends, in such Occasions, where it might be much for their Good to have them speak. I mean, when their Circumstances require the Charity of a Friend to advise them, or put them in mind of such Oversights, as they observe not in themselves. For here, while Friends see them of an impatient and jealous Humor, such as makes an ill use of Good Advice; how often are these discourag'd from their Pious Designs, and omit the Part both of Friendship and Charity, upon the apprehension of doing Mischief by it, thro' their Indisposition, who cannot bear it? This I set down with a particular Remark, as having often seen the Experience of it; wherefore I cannot but recommend it in general to all, That, upon receiving Advice or Hint of Miscarriage from any Friend, they would be Moderate, without discovering either Anger, or Dislike, or Melancholy, or Jealousie; for that the Symptoms of such an ill Temper may discourage all like Attempts for the future, and be the occasion of leaving them to the Effects of their own Oversights

sights or Indiscretion. I confess, it ought not to be so; but so weak is the Charity of most, and such a mixture of Self-love there is with the best Friendship, that there's but too much reason to apprehend, that silence will be the Effect of abus'd Charity.

3dly, There is another Impatience, which instead of speaking too much, speaks too little; and this is the Effect sometimes of Melancholy, sometimes of a Sullen Pride, and both ways is to be reprov'd as Unchristian. *First*, For the great Injury it does those, who thus nourish Poyson in their own Breast, such as causes a universal Disorder in the Soul, and hinders it from the quiet Performance of all Spiritual Duties; and then works into so many unjust Reasonings, rash Censures, and groundless Jealousies, that 'tis a question, whether Charity be not lost with their Peace. *2dly*, For the Injury done to others, since a discontented silence is taken by those, who think themselves concern'd, as a form'd Anger, and proves sufficient Occasion for a Thousand Imaginary Discontents, and Uncharitable Reasonings; when many times there is nothing more than Mistakes on both sides, such as by a Moderate

derate and Peaceable Conference might have been prevented, upon the first appearance of the Misunderstanding. Wherefore I must set this down not only as Impatience, but as Indiscretion too, since it has so much ill Management in it.

4thly, There is another Impatience, in presently shewing Resentments, upon any word let fall by Company, as if it were a Reflection, or design'd Affront upon them; and hence engaging in Uncharitable Disputes, and improving a Jest or light Word into Contention. This Impatience is mixt with Jealousie, and very often with Indiscretion, and upon all accounts is reprobable. A little Patience with some Management, is to be the Remedy: It being no matter of Difficulty to pass by a Reflection, either as not understood, or not levell'd at them, or even to turn it by with a Jest, such as discovers neither Guilt or Concern. And what is this, but to prescribe either Silence or a Smile? And is it not great Imprudence to receive a Wound, when so little is requir'd for putting by the Stroke?

5thly, There is another Impatience, in being often Peevish and Fretful, and
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so to speak to others, as if there was always a Wasp upon the Tongue. I will own, this may be no more than Ill Custom, or the Effect of Indisposition or Temper, and therefore may deserve from others both Compassion and Patience: But I must say too, that it is not Edifying, and therefore cannot but recommend to all, who profess Religion and Piety, that they would be Watchful against it; especially those, who have any degree of Superiority; for that to be so often Snapping and Biting gives ill Example, and are qualities, which suit not with the Sweetness and Mildness of the Christian Temper. We love it not in others; why should we bear it in our selves?

Lastly, There is an Impatience in regard of our selves, in not bearing the Trouble of our own Infirmities, Imperfections, Relapses, the Difficulties of Amendment, or Darkness of our State. Piety and Good Desires are generally at the bottom of this, but they are very ill manag'd; since next to Wilful Sin, there is nothing more Prejudicial to the Service of God, than this Impatience; whilst it unqualifies all for making a true Judgment of themselves, involves them in endless Troubles, and

indisposes for all that is Spiritual. The Remedy of this must be Patience, Meekness of Spirit, and following the Advice of a Good Director; these, by degrees, will bring Comfort and Patience with them; and such as will not be persuaded to make use of them, have not yet learn'd by their Suffering, to be Wise.

These are some Particulars of Impatience, some worse than others, and yet all bad enough. I wish all the Professors of the Gospel would seriously look upon them with all the ill Effects, that generally attend them; they would certainly see so much disagreeable to the Life of Christ, as to give them a Dislike, and draw Confusion from the daily Practice of what renders them so unlike their Master. O God, encrease this their Confusion, till by daily Labor they Work their Souls into a better Disposition, and by Patience shew, whose Disciples they are.

*Thirteenth Sunday after
Pentecost.*

BESIDES the Virtues hitherto menti-
on'd, there are still many other
Ingredients to make up the Good Chri-
stian: One of these is Constancy, which
is a Firmness of Mind, not only in
Suffering, but likewise in Doing whate-
ver God exacts from us; so as to go on
steddily with Duty, without being
diverted either by our own Sloth, Soli-
citude, Melancholy, or by the Flatte-
ries or Terrors of the World. This
short Description of Constancy shews
Christians, how much in earnest they
ought to be in what they have underta-
ken; and that to Profess the Name of
Christ and his Gospel, to join in a
Form of Religion, to make a Shew of
Holiness, either in Habit, or Words, or
any outward Ceremonies, is nothing to
the purpose, if the Heart be not so tru-
ly possess'd with God, and the Love of
him, as to be Sincere in seeking him,
and in earnest in whatever his Holy
Will demands from them.

This must be the Interior Dispositi-
on of every Christian, that desires to
be

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be sav'd ; and the Foundation of it must be in the Sincerity of their Faith : Whence they are not to Content themselves with a hasty Repetition of their Creed, and a Superficial Profession of their Believing it, aslikewise of whatever the Gospel teaches ; for all this may be no more, than the Effect of Education or Custom, and as speaking a Language they have been bred up to from their Childhood ; but if they think of Living Christians, they must weigh the import of the Words, and consider, whether the Faith, of what they profess with their Lips, be really and truly in their Hearts. They must consider, whether they have an assured Faith of God, and an Eternity to come ; that Happiness will be the Recompence of the Just, and Hell the Punishment of the Wicked ; that Heaven is worth all their Labor ; that if they Miscarry, they are of all Creatures the most Miserable ; that they must certainly Miscarry, if they love and seek this World, and not God ; if they live in a Sinful State, and either despise all the Means of Repentance, or are so Insincere in the use of them, as seldom to go beyond the Ceremonial Part ? If the Heart be possess'd with a
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real Faith of these Particulars, and other Branches belonging to them, this Faith will be the best Foundation for that Constancy, which must carry Christians thro' all the Difficulties of Life, and thro' the Necessary Trials of Virtue; this Faith will especially establish them against the Dangers of Sin; it will oblige them to be in earnest in the use of such Remedies, as God has appointed for the Pardon of Sin; and it will make them cheerfully pursue those Ways, which withdraw the Soul from the World, and lead it nearer to God: And whoever can but come to a Constancy of Mind in these Points, needs not question, but he has all that, which is Necessary for a Future State.

The First Part of Constancy is against the Dangers of Sin; this belongs to every Christian, because all live in this danger; and if there be not such a Firmness of Soul, as to keep it steady against all the Solicitations of whatever Pleases, and the Apprehensions of all that Terrifies, there can be no Security against the worst of Evils. Now a Sincere Faith is the best Help to this; for when a Soul has this Principle well settl'd in it, that its Only Good is the Possession of God; and its Only Real Misfortune

Misfortune is to be eternally Separated from him, this will help us to despise the most powerful Charms of the World, and likewise all, that is frightful in it. For when a short Recollection has moderated the Violence of the first Impressions, and given us Opportunity of taking the true Measures of things from this Principle thus fixt in the Heart, here presently the Soul begins to raise it self, and, by the Light of Faith, settles these Conclusions; that the most pleasing Objects, which flatter Sense and Inclination, but in the Enjoyment evidently hazard its Separation from God, can have nothing truly Desirable, or truly Valuable in them: That whatever Evils are Terrible to Nature, but by a Patient Submission, are the most assur'd Means, for coming to the Possession of God, have nothing of real unhappiness in them, but are more to be coveted than fear'd. These Conclusions being fixt above Dispute or Doubt, here the Soul makes a true Judgment both of its natural Desires and Fears; that they are both equally the Effect of a corrupt Nature, and both alike to be despis'd; that, to regard and be directed by these, is in Fact to renounce
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its Faith, and not to act as Christian, but as an Unbeliever; and therefore, that it cannot possibly be in earnest in what it professes to believe, if it does not renounce these, and act according to what it believes.

Thus Faith is the Root of a Christian Life, and Constancy is the Fruit, that grows upon it; for when the Soul is thus possess'd, it stands firm, as upon a Rock, against all Assaults. For tho' there be still something inviting to Nature in Riches, in Honor, in the Esteem of the World, in its Satisfaction and Pleasures; yet how little a Way can this Invitation go, when it sees its Eternal Good either wholly Lost, or very much Hazarded by them? This Consideration quite changes the Property of them; so that what to Nature seems Desirable, to Faith appears Contemptible. Hence the Faithful Soul passes by all Worldly Solicitations, or with Resolution, rejects them; finding more of horror than attractive, in all that, which pleases for a Moment, but leads to Eternal Death; and wonders, how Men, who say they have Reason and Faith, can admire those, as real Goods, and embrace them with Joy, which they believe must soon be follow'd with their Everlasting Confusion.

Confusion. Upon the same Principle, the Faithful Soul finds a Joy of Faith under all the Evils of this Life ; because it sees them helpful in disengaging the Heart from the love of the World, and raising it to the desires of a better ; and as for all those Persecutions, which are rais'd against her, because of her Fidelity to Justice and Truth, she sees enough in these to embrace them with Joy, since she knows, this is the Way of the Cross, which leads to Glory, and that a Crown of Bliss is the Fruit of such Thorns. In this manner Constancy follows upon a lively Faith, and confirms the Soul against the Dangers of Sin, keeping it steady to Duty in all Extremes.

But if its Unhappiness has been such, as to fall under the guilt of Sin, Constancy has here its Effect too, in obliging the Christian to be in earnest, in the use of such Means, as God has appointed for the Pardon of Sin. Hence the Christian, that is influenc'd by Constancy, does not only go thro' the Form of Repentance, by Examining the State of his Conscience, Confessing his Sins, Desiring Absolution, and Performing the Penance enjoind ; but is Solicitous, *First*, To do this well, that
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is, with such a sincere Sorrow for Sin, as to hope, that what is forgiven on Earth, may be forgiven in Heaven; and then with the same Sincerity pursues his Resolutions of Amendment, and of beginning a New Life. For this end, he frequently calls to Mind his Sins, considers the Engagements he made, and the Conditions, upon which he receiv'd Absolution; and daily examines, whether he uses due Care in satisfying those Engagements, and complying with the Conditions; because he knows, that God is not to be mock'd; that true Repentance is not only a Confession of Sin, but an Obligation of using due Endeavors for Amendment; and that if he be not Solicitous in satisfying this Obligation, he has just Reason to question his Sincerity, and to fear, that his Repentance was only Ceremonial, but not from the Heart; and consequently, that he still lies under the full Guilt of his former Sins. Upon this Consideration his Repentance ends not with Absolution, but appears more sensible afterward, in all the Care necessary for gaining upon past failings, and preventing their Return. And tho' great Watchfulness and Labor may be Necessary for this,
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in standing against the Force of Corruption, in overcoming a rebellious Nature, and a perverse World, and in separating from the Occasions of Sin; yet Constancy built on a firm Faith carries him thro' these Difficulties; because he knows, that Sin separates from God; that Repentance is the only Remedy of Sin, and that there can be no Repentance, where there are not due Endeavors us'd for overcoming and forsaking Sin.

The same Help the good Christian has in all the Ways, that lead nearer to God; for when he reflects, that he was created for the Possession of God, there is no true Satisfaction, but in advancing towards that End. He sees 'tis Nonsense to profess Christianity, and not to live so in the Practice of its Rules, as to have just hopes of coming to the End of Religion: He sees 'tis Childrens-play to pretend to Salvation, and not to do, what is Necessary for obtaining it. Hence having a Knowledge of his Duties, and of the Means of Salvation, he makes it his Business, not only to perform them, as to the Ceremony, but in such a manner, that they may be helpful towards his last End: Thus he endeavors to Pray, thus to Fast,

Fast, thus to follow the Directions of the Gospel, in first seeking the Kingdom of God and its Justice. And as to all the Difficulties, that appear, he always says; Heaven is worth all my Labor; where is my Faith, if I give up the Cause of Heaven, for the Difficulties of gaining it? Where is my Reason, if professing to seek God, and knowing this to be my only Interest, I let Trifles quite put me out of the Way, and expose my Soul to endless Misery, for fear of making Flesh uneasie for a Moment? Thus he goes on with Constancy; and may this, O God, be the Method of thy Servants; let it be the Effect of a lively Faith to establish them against the Dangers of Sin; to be in earnest in the Means of recovering from its Guilt, and in overcoming all the Difficulties, which meet them in the Way of Salvation. Such a Constancy may bring them to a Crown; but without it, who can give them Hopes?

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Last Sunday's Discourse might be an excuse for making here any Addition

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tion concerning Inconstancy ; but this being a general Unhappiness, which is the Disappointment of so many Good Purposes and Religious Designs, it can be no Disservice to Christianity to speak more directly of it.

What the Mischiefs of Inconstancy are, is too evident in the Lives of most Christians ; whilst where ever there is a Faith of a Life to come, and yet not due Care us'd in providing for it, Inconstancy has still a share in the Miscarriage. It is true, some are so Lost to all that is Good, that the Despair of Amendment puts by the Thoughts of Attempting it ; but, as to the far greater Number, they not only think, but likewise purpose and resolve upon a Change ; but of all these, how few are they, who carry on their Purposes so far, as to Accomplish what they design ? Let every one consider themselves, and see, if they are not one. And why is it ? Do we not know our Duty ? Are we not sensible what our Sins are ? Do we not foresee the ill Consequence of them ? Do we not conclude of the Necessity of our Amendment ; and not only resolve upon it, but likewise frequently undertake it ? And why is it not effected ; but after so many Proposals

posals and Attempts, the Work is still undone, and we are yet what we were? Is not the general Reason of this, because we have not Steadiness enough to go on with what we undertake; and for want of Constancy leave our Work unfinish'd? Here is our great Misfortune; we are subject to a kind of Lightness and Uncertainty in all the Faculties of our Soul, tho' some much more than others; a little serious Consideration lays before us the Unhappiness of a Sinful State, convinces us of our intolerable Neglects; and how often is it, that from what we read and hear, we seem so sensibly mov'd, as if now nothing could possibly happen to prevent or even delay our Amendment? So far the Weakest go; and where there are but the least Seeds of Piety, how often, upon such lively Impressions, do these shoot forth into Sighs and Tears? And who now would not expect some considerable Change from such encouraging Promises? And yet let but some new Object occur; let there be but a change of Place, of Company, of Business, or Entertainment, and the former Ideas are so soon weakn'd, if not quite effaced, that now there appears nothing in the Soul, capable of
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giving a Check to those Inclinations, which were but solately condemn'd as the Cause of its Unhappiness. This is our Condition, and so truly Miserable it is in Persons, who are hast'ning to Eternity, and can have no Prospect of Happiness, but upon an Effectual Change of their Lives, that we have Reason daily to Lament it, and to allow no Truce to our Grief, till it be follow'd with a settled Resolution, of making it our daily Business to become more serious in a Concern whereon our Eternity depends.

If this be not done, how Vain must our Hopes be; since upon looking well into them, they are no more, than a Sight of our Unhappiness, without Endeavors for putting our selves in a better State? And what will this avail us? What help can it be to us, if we discover the infinit Workings of our Pride, in admiring our selves, in seeking to be admir'd by others; and in the Contempt of those, who will not flatter us? What if we see our selves under the Violence of Sinful Passions, and by them frequently drawn into Sin? What if we observe our Souls engag'd in so much Worldly Solitude, as to attend little to the Work of our Salvation?

tion? What if we are convinc'd of a general Neglect of Eternity being our Fault; of being under the Government of Sloth, of the Love of Ease and Appetite; of Admiring all that is Vain; of being Earnest in all that is to Please our selves, and seldom Serious in what belongs to God? What help I say, can there be in making this Observation of our selves, if we let it be no more than the subject of a passing Sigh, and still keep on our Course? Can this sight of our Misery give us Hope of Mercy? If the Traveller sees a Precipice before him, and upon this expresses his Concern; if he stands a while, looks about him, considers which Way to avoid the Danger; and yet presently goes on again, will this Foresight of Danger prevent his Fall? If the Pilot discovers Rocks before him, is troubled at the sight, sees which Way to Steer with safety, and yet still holds on his Course, will this prevent his Shipwrack?

If this be no help in either Case, but the sight of the Danger Aggravates the Neglect with the Infamy of Folly and Madnels; what must it be in Circumstances of a much higher Concern; when Christians seeing their present Unhappiness, seeing Precipices and
Rocks

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Rocks before them, so that everlasting Death must be their Fate, if they go on, however keep on still their usual Course, and let the Interruption of a few serious Thoughts serve for no more, than to be a future Evidence against themselves, that their Misery is not Misfortune, but their Choice? This is certainly the general Case of all, that live on in a State of Sin; for these cannot but acknowledge, they have a Sense of being in an ill Way; the Glimpse of Divine Light, which at times glances upon them, shews them the guilt of their Pride, and Ambition, of their Covetousness, Frauds, and Injustice, of their Prodigality, Sensuality, and Intemperance, of their Fondness of the World, Forgetfulness and Neglect of God, and Departing from the Ways of the Gospel. All this they own in the Confession of their Weakness, and in their Imperfect Repentance. But where is the Change? They go on still as before; and what is this, but to run on upon Rocks and Precipices, which they see before them? The Point then is clear, that their Misery is not to be placed to their want of Sense; but to a certain Lightness and Inconstancy of Mind, which makes them False to themselves,

themselves, and Unsteady in a Matter, which requires the greatest Steadiness.

But if Inconstancy be the Occasion of Misery, how is it to be remedied? The Remedy must be the same, as in things, that are ever Moving or Floating; all Endeavors must be us'd to fix them; for till such Means be found out they will certainly Move and Float still. All things, that are light, cannot be expected to abide long in one Place, but will be carried about as the Wind Blows; and set Boats in what part of the River you please, if they are not fasten'd, they will be born away with the Stream. It is the same with the Minds of Men; let them be turn'd towards God by Prayer, till them be touch'd with a Sense of their Sins; let them have a true Sight of their present Misery, and think of quitting it, this will signify little, if they are not by due Means render'd stable and fixt, but with the next Wind that blows, or with the next Current they meet, they will again be carried away. Hence it is, that Prayers and Confessions are so little to the purpose in such great Number; they leave their Minds as light as Straws, thro' that Vanity and Self-love, with which they are affected;

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affected; they have their Hearts as unsettled, as Boats adrift, thro' the many Passions, to which they are subject; and they think of setting all right by some formal Prayers and Confessions of Custom; and suppose they do; what can this signifie, if still their Minds and Hearts are left under all their former lightness and unsettledness? This is no more than the settling Boats or Straw, without Care to fix them; and how long can this last, but only till the next Wind, that blows, or the next Motion of the Water?

I say then, that Christians must make it their Business, *First*, To Remedy the Lightness and Inconstancy of their Minds, and then some Fruit may be expected of their other Pious Exercises, with just Hopes of being deliver'd from their Sins; but this Settlement can no otherwise be, than by fixing the Heart to something Immoveable, that is, to God; for till the Heart, which of it self is Light and Changeable, be linked to that, which is Unchangeable, it must still be subject to the Effects of its own natural Weakness, and ever be expos'd to the uncertainty of Winds and Streams. This, I know, is to prescribe a great and laborious

borious Work, even the Change of the Whole Man: But what Remedy? If Man be so disorder'd, that ^{into} a certain lightness of Mind, he is likely to finish nothing he undertakes for his Eternal Good, this lightness must be remov'd, or else he can have no other Prospect, of being Lost; and if the Remedy be hard, yet 'tis worth the Pains. To tell me therefore of Persons being daily at their Prayers, and often at the Sacraments, whose Hearts are as Vain, as the World can make them; and asking Pardon of their Sins, without Thoughts of remedying that Inconstancy of Mind, which is one Cause of all their Sins, is to tell me of Persons Laboring as much in Vain, as those, who complaining of Quicksilver being unmanageable, without taking any Care to fix it. The Mind therefore is to be fixt; but by what Method this is to be effected, must be remitted to the following Sunday. In the mean time, let us all with Humility acknowledge whatever degree we have of Inconstancy, by which we are so often put by our best Resolutions, and leave those Undertakings unfinished which are most for our Eternal Good; let us beg Pardon for the many times we have mock'd Heaven by our Insincere and Barren Purposes, and

tion? The Consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and the Procession of the Holy Ghost from Father and Son, is generally believ'd, and has Place in our Creeds; and whence have we this Positive Determination, but from Tradition? As to all Forms of Public or Private Prayer; the Particular Manner, and Ceremonies, and Prayers in Administring the Sacraments, in Ordination and Burials, in appointing Fasts and Holy-days; in the greatest part of Church Disciplin, in the Division of Diocesses and Parishes, in the Subordination of Pastors, in Baptizing Infants, in Church-men not being of some Handicraft Trade, in the Distinction of their Habit, in giving the Sacrament in the Church, Fasting, Kneeling, and not Sitting at a Table after Supper, in putting the Psalms into Rhime, with infinit other Particulars; what positive Authority is for these, besides Tradition? Take away this, and let the whole Matter be duly weigh'd, and I question not, but, as *S. Gregory* observes, the Preaching of Faith will be reduced to a meer Name.

But now while I plead for Tradition, I do not in this pretend to justify all
Tradi-

Traditions; neither does the Church require our Approbation of them. Hence as to all such Traditions, like those of the Pharisees, which are either Repugnant to the Law of God, or Frivolous and Unprofitable to Piety and true Worship, or are nothing but Vain and Superstitious Observations, and therefore may be call'd the *Traditions of Men*, the Church no where recommends them, but requires all to look upon them with the Contempt they deserve. Our Submission is demanded to none but Apostolical and Ecclesiastical Traditions, such, as have been receiv'd from the *Apostles*, or have been the Ordinances of the *Church*; and of what Authority these ought to be, the Scripture and Fathers teach so positively, in requiring Obedience and Submission, that the Contempt of them cannot be separated from the Contempt of God, who has put them over us.

But how can it be known what Traditions are Apostolical? The Fathers above-cited give some directions for this; which being summ'd up by *Grotius*, I will repeat his Words: *First*, It is a Just Presumption, those things were deliver'd from the Apostles, which are every where found in the Churches, and

and whereof any other Original does not appear.

adly, If there be some Pious Witnesses, Wise, and of great Authority in the Church, who affirm a thing, as deliver'd from the Apostles, we have now so great a Proof, as is in this Matter sufficient, nor less than that, by which we discern the Apostolical Writings, from those, that are not Apostolical. What they found in the Church, they held; what they learned, they taught; what they received from their Fathers, they deliver'd to their Children, saith *Augustin*. A Mathematical Certitude is not requir'd in all things. If one be pertinacious, he will as easily find escapes against the Book, as against the Tradition. But it became the Divine Providence to take care, that neither the Books in Matters of Moment, nor the Tradition should be adulterated; and that it has perform'd. Why then did not the Apostles write what they had deliver'd? Because they writ, as Occasion was offer'd, and as the time requir'd, not a System of Doctrine and Government. What things pertain'd to the Regiment and the Peace of the Churches, were indeed written in Great Letters, in the conspicuous use of

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of those Churches, which were Founded by the Apostles, *Judgm. of Rel.*

This is agreeable to what the Antient Fathers taught, and must be so far acknowledg'd even by the most Precise Retrenchers; as to confess, that many things of those which they yet retain and practice, have no other Authority for being Apostolical than this. No Religion can subsist, that wholly lays by Tradition; and how then can it be reasonable to declaim against Tradition, and yet to retain things that have no other Title? The only thing I propose, is, That those Particulars be examin'd, which have been laid by, as the Inventions of Men, by Modern Congregations, and be compar'd with what they yet retain; and that they would equally approve, what has equal Authority to support it. And if they find in us (as they may) a Desire of laying by all that, which has not as good Authority for it, as the things, which they retain as most warrantable, I do not see, but there may be an Accommodation of this Point. O God, inspire all Christians with this good Disposition, that they may receive all those things, which carry thy Authority with them. The Apostles had thy
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Authority for what they taught and deliver'd; the Church has thy Authority for delivering the same, and likewise for governing the Flock, and judging what is convenient in the Administration of Church-Government, Discipline or Public Worship. If then we receive, what is thus deliver'd, we obey thy Ordinance; and Obstinacy here is Disobedience to thee, and the ready way to overthrow the best Institutions, even thy own, and to let in Confusion, where thou hast commanded Unity and Peace.

S. Lawrence, August 10.

ON this Day the Subject of our Discourse shall be, of Praying for the Souls of the Faithful departed, and of Purgatory. To prepare for this, I must declare what our Church teaches. *First*, That all such as keep the Commandments, and die so in the State of Grace, as to be free from the Guilt of Sin, and from all Punishment due to it, at their departure out of this Life, go immediately to Heaven. *2dly*, That such as live wickedly, and die without Repen-

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ance, at their departure go forthwith to Hell. And here the Question comes, Whether it can be reasonably apprehended, that These Two Sorts include all Mankind: That all are either so very Good, as to go immediately to Heaven; or so very Wicked, as to be cast into Hell?

There seems reason enough to fear, there are but very Few of the Former Sort; that is, so very Perfect, as to be forthwith translated from this Vale of Misery, to the Possession of God: And as for all those who come not up to this Perfection, are they all so very Wicked, as to be cast forth into Utter Darknels? We hope, that amongst Christians, there are many of another Degree, who, tho' not so very Good and Perfect, as to be immediately receiv'd into Bliss, are not however so very Wicked, as to be eternally banish'd from the Sight of God, and damn'd for ever. For what shall we say of all those, who carefully avoiding all grievous Sins, as being truly desirous to save their Souls, are yet subject to many Imperfections; as to some Neglect of their Prayers, some Light and Sudden Passions of Impatience, Anger, or other Evils of Inadvertency, which
may

may be term'd rather the Consequences of a Natural Weakness, than Wilful Offences? What shall we say of this Rank of Christians, if they die without a Just Repentance, as it often happens to many, who are taken off suddainly, or by such Distempers, which seizing the Head, deprive them of all Means of making their Peace with God? It seems not consistent with the Mercy of God, for such Trespases of Weakness or Inadvertency found in his Children, to cast them out of his Sight for ever; and therefore Hell can have no claim in them: And yet they are not in a State of going immediately to Heaven; because dying under the guilt of these Offences, tho' light, their Souls are so far Polluted; and the Scripture declares the Will of God in this Case, that nothing that is Polluted or Defil'd, can enter into Heaven; *There shall in no wise enter into it any thing, that defileth, Rev. 21. 27.* Therefore they must be deposited for a time, in some Third Place, till by suffering, they satisfy the Justice of God, and thus be purified from the guilt of those Imperfections, in which they departed this Life, and so be prepar'd for Heaven.

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Thus we divide Christians into Three Ranks : *First*, The very Good. *2dly*, The very Wicked. *3dly*, A Middle Sort, which are neither so very Good, and yet not Wicked ; and this grounded upon Scripture ; which likewise gives farther Authority to that, which is most called in question, by shewing some Sins to be forgiven in the Life to come ; which cannot be understood of the very Good, who go immediately to Heaven, because there no Sin has entrance ; nor of the very Wicked, who go to Hell, because that is no Place for Forgiveness or Redemption ; and consequently it must be understood of a Third State.

That there are some Sins forgiven in the Life to come, is shewn, *First*, In *2 Macc. 12. 43.* where *Judas Macchabeus* sends Money to *Jerusalem*, that a Sacrifice might be offer'd for the Sins of those that were dead ; *Offerri pro peccatis mortuorum Sacrificium* : And where it is declar'd to be a Holy and Pious Thought to pray for the Dead, *that they may be deliver'd from their Sins*. Now tho' these Books are not receiv'd, as Canonical by all ; yet since their Authority was made use of in the Primitive Church, as by *Origen*, *S. Cyprian*, *Eusebius*, *Cæsariensis*,

sariensis, S. Gregory Naz. S. Ambrose: Since they were receiv'd by the *African* by the *Eastern* and *Western* Church; since S. Jerom says they were read by the Church, and that the Church read nothing, but what was for the Edification of the People, and the Confirmation of Truth; it cannot be reasonably imagin'd, that there was any thing in these Books contrary to Piety, and to the Faith of the Church; and therefore, that this Doctrin was what was then believ'd.

2dly, In S. Matt. 12. 32. *Whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.* In which Words Chriſt ſuppoſes, there are ſome Sins forgiven in the next Life, tho' thoſe againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not: And ſo S. *Auguſtin* Expoſunds this place of the Goſpel, *de Civ. dei.* l. 21. c. 13. 24. And it cannot be imagin'd, that ſo great a Prelate would faſten a Senſe upon Chriſt's Words, contrary to Faith, Piety, and the Belief of the Church.

3dly, In 1 Cor. 3. 15. *If any man's Work ſhall burn, he ſhall ſuffer loſs: but he himſelf ſhall be ſav'd; yet ſo as by Fire.* Which Words, tho' difficult and capable

ble of other Construction, yet may be understood, as hinting a Third Place, where there is Salvation, yet so as by Fire. And so *S. Augustin* seems to expound them, in *Ps. 37.* where he says, If they build Gold, Silver, Precious Stones, they would be out of danger of Both Fires; not only of that Eternal, which shall be the Everlasting Torment of the Wicked, but likewise of that Fire, which shall purifie those, who shall be sav'd by Fire.

Hitherto Scripture; now let the Fathers speak what was the Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive Church, and whether agreeable to this Explication of H. Writ, and to the Reason above given.

Tertullian l. 10. de Monog. c. 10. speaking of the Obligation of a Christian Widow, says, She prays likewise for her Husband's Soul, and begs in the mean time Refreshment for him, and that he may have part in the First Resurrection; and makes Oblations on the Anniversary Days of his Departure.

S. Cyril of Jerusalem Cat. Myst. 5. Then, says he, we pray for our Holy Fathers and Bishops deceas'd: And, Lastly, We pray for all such as have died amongst us; believing, that those Souls find ve-

ry great help, for whom the Prayer is offer'd of that Holy and Awful Sacrifice, which lies upon the Altar. — After the same manner we also offer up Prayers for the Dead, tho' Sinners, — by making an Oblation of Christ, who died for our Sins, that so we may obtain Mercy both for our selves and them, of him, who is most merciful.

S. Gregory Nyssen. Orat. de Mortuis. Where he says; That such as die, having been cleans'd from their Sins, either in this Life, by Prayers and the practise of Vertue; or after Death having been expiated in the Furnace of Purging-fire, are receiv'd into Everlasting Bliss.

S. Basil in c. 9. Isa. If we have disclos'd, says he, our Sin in Confession, the growing Weed is by this means so wither'd and dry, that it will be easily consum'd by the Purging Fire.

S. Gregory Naz. Orat. 39. in S. Dominica, Where having mention'd Two Expiations in this Life, viz. Baptism and Penance, he mentions likewise a Third in the Life to come. In the next Life, says he, they may perhaps come to be Baptized by Fire, which is the last Baptism; not only more painful, but also more lasting, which devours the Gross Matter, like Hay,

Hay, and consumes the Frailty of all Sin.

S. Epiphanius Har. 75. The Prayers, says he, which we offer for the Dead, are advantageous to them, tho' they are not able to cancel all Sins.—We mention both the Just and Sinners; the latter, that we may obtain Mercy for them.

S. Chrysostom. Hom. 41. in Ep. 1. ad Cor. If a Sinner has departed this Life, we must relieve him, as much as possible, not by Weeping, but by praying for him, giving Alms, and making Oblations for his Soul. For these things are not instituted in vain, and it is not an Idle Commemoration, we make in the Sacred Mysteries of such as are dead, —but that they may thereby receive some Consolation. —Let us therefore with all cheerfulness assist those that are dead, and pray for them; —We are all but One Body, tho' some Members are more noble than others: 'Tis possible we may obtain Pardon for them, in order to a full Discharge, by our Prayers and Oblations. —Why therefore do you grieve, since to the Party deceas'd you may bring so great relief? *An. Ho. 21. upon the Acts.* It is not in vain that Oblations are made for the Dead,

we don't in vain Pray and give Alms for them. All this is the Ordinance of the Holy Ghost, who designs we should help one another. For see, he will be benefited by you, and you by him, being perswaded for his sake to some Charitable Work; where you are the occasion to him of his Salvation, and he to you, of your Charity; and you need not doubt, but it will be of good effect.

S. Jerome Ep. 26. ad Pammach. on the Death of his Wife. Other Husbands dress their Wives Tombs with Flowers, — But our Friend Pammachius pays no other Duty to the Holy Ashes, and Venerable Bones, but by giving Alms, cherishing them by this Sweet Odor; because he knows 'tis written; As Water extinguishes the Fire, so Alms blot out Sin.

S. Augustin, l. 9. Conf. c. 13. Prays thus for his Mother decess'd: I know, she dealt mercifully, and from her Heart forgave to her Debtors their Trespases; do thou likewise remit her Debts to her, if She has also contracted some, in those many years she liv'd after Baptism; Forgive them, O Lord, forgive them, I beseech thee. And de cura pro mort. c. 1. In the Books of Macchabees we read, that
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Sacrifice was offer'd for the Dead. But if there were no such thing in the Old Scripture, yet the Authority of the whole Church, which is evident in this Practice, is of no small weight: Where among the Prayers said by the Priest at the Altar of God, the recommendation of the Dead is recited in its Place. *Again, Serm. 32. de verb. Ap.* A Pompous Funeral is no advantage to the Dead — but as for the Prayers of the Holy Church, the Propitiatory Sacrifice and Alms, which are offer'd for their Souls, no doubt, but they are thereby aided, so as to be treated with greater Mercy, than their Sins deserv'd. For this, which has been deliver'd by the Fathers, the whole Church observes, when at the Sacrifice it self, the dead are in their place commemorated, to pray for all such as are departed in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and that it be remember'd, that the Sacrifice is likewise offer'd for them. — It is beyond all question, these things are beneficial to the Dead; but only to such, who so liv'd, as to be capable of receiving help from these things after their Death.

Thus speaks Antiquity; and now, besides the Evidence of a General Pra-

Allice of Praying for the Dead, does it not seem clear, that these Fathers suppos'd a Third State of Souls after this Life, Distinct from that of Heaven and Hell? For while in their Prayers for the Deceas'd, they Pray for Help, Relief, Comfort, Mercy and Pardon, they certainly suppose Souls to be in a State, where they both want all this Assistance, and are capable of receiving it. This cannot be in Heaven, where there is no want of Relief or Pardon; nor in Hell, because, tho' there be a want of all, there is no possibility of receiving it.

That this State of Souls can be in no degree of Glory, and consequently not in Heaven, seems necessarily to be own'd, not only because Heaven cannot receive any thing so far defil'd with Sin, as to stand in need of Pardon, or of being discharg'd of its Guilt, as the Fathers express it; but likewise because they suppose the Souls, for which they Pray, to be in a Suffering State. So *S. Augustin* expressly, *de civit. dei* l. 21. c. 24. where discoursing of such, as Die under the Guilt of light Sins, he says; *It is certain, that such being purg'd by Temporal Pains, which they suffer before the Day of Judgment, when they receive their*

their Bodies, shall not be condemn'd to Eternal Torments. In which Words, this Father owns a State of Christian Souls, dying with the Guilt of lighter Sins, and Suffering Temporal Pain for them in the next Life; yet so, as at the Last Day, not to be cast off with the Reprobate; which is a State very different from Hell, and every degree of Heaven; since in the one of these, there is no Suffering, and in the other, no Release. These Temporal Pains he mentions again ib. c. 13. Some, says he, suffer Temporal Punishment in this Life only; others after their Death; others both in this Life, and likewise in the next; but still before that Last and Terrible Judgment. Now these Temporal Pains being wholly Inconsistent with every degree of Bliss, this cannot be in Heaven, nor yet in Hell, where the Punishment is not Temporal, but Eternal; it necessarily implies a Third State, in which there is Suffering for Sin, but such as shall have an end.

Now this being the Doctrin of the Church, and founded both on Scripture and the Practice of the Universal and Primitive Church, I cannot think, but all those, who desire to Regulate their Faith by Scripture and the Primi-

tive Church, may easily be reconcil'd to this Point, and not let it have any part in keeping up a Division, and breaking the Peace of the Church. For tho' the Word *Purgatory* has not the Authority of Scripture; yet since the Church does no more than by it express what has all the Authority that can be requir'd; there ought to be no more Exception against the Term, than against those of *Trinity*, *Sacrament*, or *Consubstantial*, which all generally make use of to express their Belief, tho' not found in Scripture. If the Doctrine be well grounded, why should we Quarrel about terms? This does not become the Followers of the Gospel. Grant Peace, O God, in our Days, and remove the Scandal of our Divisions.

Assumption of the B. Virgin,
August 15.

THIS Day we will speak of some Devotions to the *B. V. Mary*, and see, what are the Exceptions against them, and what the Abuses in them. And of all these,

these, whatever they be, we lay down this as a general Ground for coming to a good Understanding, that none of them, however approv'd, are enjoin'd by the Church, and so far from being made a Term of Communion, that all the Members of it are at full Liberty of using them, if they think fit, and likewise of letting them alone.

Now in Particular, as to the *Rosary* or *Beads*, it is certain they are approv'd, and may be serviceable to Piety, if us'd according to the direction of those Books, which prescribe the Method; by leading the Mind thro' all the Mysteries of Man's Redemption, and giving it a frequent Opportunity of a grateful Acknowledgment of all, that God has done for us. They may in Particular be very helpful to such as cannot read, or are any ways disabled from the use of a Book: Since by these a Person may at any time employ Half an Hour in Prayer, without any Burthen of Memory, who otherwise would be at a Loss in Spending five Minutes. This is many times a help even to the Learned, who, having their Minds tir'd with Books, or being desirous to Walk, have in these a Method of making Addresses to God;

but a much greater Help to the Ignorant, in being thus provided of a Means of being as Constant, and Spending as much time in Prayer, as those, who have the best Choice of Books. And what this Advantage is, those may easily imagin, who know how Dull and Barren are the Minds of the Unlearned; and how soon they are at a stand, when they even intend to turn their Hearts to God.

This Convenience must be acknowledged considerable; but then, when the thing is enquir'd into, and it appears, that in using the *Beads*, Persons Pray Ten Times more to the Virgin Mary, than to God, this overthrows all again, and makes the Advantage of such Prayers, to be worse than not praying at all. This Description of the *Beads*, I confess, has no Encouragement in it, as far as it seems to Insinuate a greater Application, and more Confidence in the B. Virgin, than in God; but this is not a true Account.

First, Because when I desire the B. Virgin to Pray to God for me, I in this acknowledge, that all is in the Hands of God, that all must come from him, that he is the Fountain of all Good; and in asking the Virgin Mary

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to Pray to him for me, is only owning her a Creature, desiring her to be Petitioner with me, and consequently acknowledging, that God's Gifts are not in her's, but his own Hands: As often then as I repeat, *Holy Mary, Pray for me*, it cannot be truly said, that I Pray to the Virgin *Mary*, and not to God; for certainly, I Pray more to God, than to her. For see; when I desire a Friend, or any Just Man on Earth, to Pray for me; is it not with Hopes, that God will hear him, and Grant what I want? Is not my Hope in God, my Expectation from God, my Desire on God? And is not my Petition made to God, while I desire my Friend to pray for me? Or can it, with Truth, be said, that my Desires and Requests are more directed to him, than to God; or that I pray to him, and not to God? The Case is here plain, that as often as I desire another to Pray for me, so often do I express my Dependance on God, and so often, in effect, do I pray to him. It is the same, when I desire the same of the Blessed Virgin; for all that I ask of her, is to be Petitioner to God for me; and here my Prayer is as much directed to God as my Petition is to the King, when I desire another

to deliver it to him, and to make an Interest for me. Altho' therefore I should say, a Thousand Times together, *Holy Mary, Pray for me*, it is not true, that I Pray more to the Virgin *Mary* than to God, because every time I ask it, I Pray to God, and expect the Grant of my Petition from him.

2dly, Because, when I desire the Virgin *Mary* to pray for me, it is not because I have a greater Confidence in her, than in God; no, God forbid, this is what I abhor with all my Soul, as Blasphemy it self; but because I have a greater Confidence in her Prayers, than in my own. I know my self to be an unhappy Sinner, and this Sense of my unworthiness makes me fear, lest my Petition be rejected; here's a Distrust of my self, and where is the Fault of this, if it be the Effect of Humility, and not of Despair? If then, as, by God's Order, *Job's* Friends were commanded to desire *Job* to Pray for them, because he was Just, and more Acceptable to God than they, so I solicit those to Pray for me, who are Just, and more Acceptable in God's Sight than my self, I do in this no way give them a Preference to God, but only

only to my self, hoping that their Prayer will more prevail than my own. And now, if Ten Times together I repeat, *Holy Mary, Pray for me*, there can be no more infer'd from hence, but that I so often express a kind of Distrust of my self, and that I think her Prayers more likely to be heard than my own. And what more in this, than in the *Israelites* desiring *Moses* or *Samuel* to Pray for them, because they hop'd, God would be favorable to their Requests, as being more Just than themselves?

But what means the so frequent Repetition of the same Prayer? If the Prayer be Good, where can be the harm of Repeating it? Can Persons in Distress be reprov'd, for often calling for help? *Perseverance* and *Importunity* in Prayer, and *Praying always*, are commended in Scripture; and can it be imagin'd, that God will not have Regard to such Perseverance, except it has Variety to recommend it? This seems a Thought beneath the Infinite Goodness of God, who prescribing us to Pray, has no where declar'd, that except we have great Change of Prayers, he will not hear us. Variety may be some help to us, in making